al-Jannah wa an-Naar

In the Light of the Qur'aan and Sunnah
Based on the Book by Dr. Umar Sulaiman al-Ashqar

an-Naar

Definition and Explanation

Hell is the abode which Allaah (swt) has prepared for those who do not believe in Him (swt), those who rebel against His (swt) laws and disbelieve in His Messengers. It is the punishment for His (swt) enemies, the prison for evildoers.

It is the ultimate humiliation and loss; there is nothing worse:

"Our Lord! Verily, whom You admit to the Fire, indeed, You have disgraced him, and never will the Dhaalimoon [polytheists and wrongdoers] find any helpers" (3:192)

"Know they not that whoever opposes and shows hostility to Allaah and His Messenger, certainly for him will be the fire of Hell to abide therein? That is extreme disgrace". (9:63)

"The losers are those who will lose themselves and their families on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, that will be a manifest loss!" (39:15)

How could Hell be other than we have described, when it is full of utterly indescribable torment, pain and grief? It is eternal and its inhabitants will remain there forever. Allaah (swt) has condemned them and their place in the Fire:

"Evil indeed it [Hell] is as an abode and as a place to dwell" (25:66)

"This is so! And for the Tagheen [transgressors] - will be an evil final return - Hell! Where they will burn, and worst [indeed] is that place to rest!" (38:55-6)

Paradise and Hell Have Already Been Created

at-Tahhaawi said, in his book on al-'Aqeedah al-Salafiyyah (correct belief in accordance with that of the early generations of Islaam) that is known as al-'Aqeedah al-Tahhaawiyyah.

"Paradise and Hell have already been created. They will never come to an end or cease to exist. Allaah (swt) created Paradise and Hell before the rest of creation, and He (swt) created inhabitants for each of them. Whoever He (swt) wishes (will enter) Paradise by His grace and mercy, and whoever He (swt) wishes (will enter Hell) as a result of His (swt) justice. Every person will behave according to that for which he was created, and his destiny will be that for which he was created; good deeds and evil deeds are foreordained for all men".

Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Abul-'Izz al-Hanafi remarked, in his commentary on this text:

"With regard to his saying that Paradise and Hell have already been created, Ahl as-Sunnah agree that Paradise and Hell have been created and are in existence at the present moment. Ahlus-Sunnah continued to hold this view, until some odd ideas of the Mu'tazilah and Qaadariyyah came along, which denied that. These groups said: "Allaah will create them (ie Paradise and Hell) on the Day of Resurrection." They said this because of their false arguments by means of which they seek to improve regulations on what Allaah (swt) should do; (they say) it befits Allaah (swt) to do this, or it does not befit Allaah (swt) to do that. They compare Him to His creation and their actions. This is a kind of anthropomorphism with regard to deeds; they have allowed the ideas of Jahmiyyah (a sect of Mu'tazilah named after the deviant, Jahm ibn Safwan) to creep into their thinking, and have become mu'attalah (those who deny that Allaah can see). They said, "It

does not make sense for Paradise to be created before the time of reward, because it will not be used or inhabited for a very long time. They rejected the aayaat and reports that contradict these false notions they seek to project onto Allaah (swt). They misinterpreted the texts and accused those who disagreed with them of going astray and concocting bid'ah".

Proofs from the Qur'aan and Hadeeth in support of this are, for example:

"Race with one another in hastening towards forgiveness from your Lord, and Paradise the width whereof is as the width of the heaven and the earth, prepared for those who believe in Allaah and His Messengers. That is the Grace of Allaah, which He bestows on whom He is pleased with. And Allaah is the Owner of Great Bounty". (57:21)

"...for Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for al-Muttaqun" (3:133)

"And fear the fire, which is prepared for the disbelievers" (3:131)

"And indeed he (Muhammad) saw him (Jibreel) at a second descent (ie another time), near Sidrat al-Muntahaa (lote tree of the utmost boundary (beyond which none can pass), near it is the Paradise of Abode" (53:13-15)

The Prophet (saw) saw Sidrat al-Muntahaa, a tree in Heaven, and near it, Paradise, as is mention in al-Bukhaari, and Muslim in the hadith of Anas (ra). At the end of this narrative of al-Israa, the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Then Jibreel brought me to Sidrat al-Muntahaa which was veiled in colours indescribable. Then I entered Paradise, and its lights were of pearls and its soil was musk".***

Muslim, Abu Dawud and Imaam Ahmad report from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger (saw) said, ***"When Allaah (swt) created Paradise and Hell, He sent Jibreel to Paradise, saying "Go and look at it and at what I have prepared therein for its inhabitants". So he went and looked at it and at what Allaah had prepared therein for its inhabitants.... then He sent him to Hellfire saying, "Go and look at it and what I have prepared therein for its inhabitants" So he looked at it and saw that it was in layers, one above the other...."***

Muslim reports from Aishah (ra) that there was a solar eclipse in the time of the Messenger (saw) and he said, "***Whilst I was standing here I saw everything that you have been promised, I even saw myself picking some of the fruits of Paradise, when you saw me stepping forward. And I saw Hellfire, parts of it consuming other parts, when you saw me stepping backward".***

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Ibn 'Abbas the same incident, ***"I saw Paradise and I tried to take a bunch of its fruit. If I had managed to do so, you would have eaten from it until the end of time. And I saw the Fire of Hell, and I have never seen anything so horrific or terrifying. I saw that the majority of its inhabitants are women."***

Muslim also reports from Anas that the Prophet (Saw) said, ***"By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, if you had seen what I saw, you would laugh little and cry much." They said, "What did you see, O Messenger of Allaah?", He said, "I saw Paradise and Hell".***

The Prophet (saw) also ascended into jannah on the night of Mi'raj in his 'Isra (night journey): for example -

* ***"...I saw four rivers flowing out from beneath Sidrat al-Muntahaa, two visible and two hidden."*** (Muslim, Kitaab al-Imaan, Baab al-'Israa, 1/150, no.164) * ***"Whilst I was walking in Paradise I saw a river whose banks were domes of hollow pearls and I asked, "What is this, O Jibreel?" He said,***

"This is al-Kawthar which your Rabb has given to you". (from Anas ibn Maalik, Sahih al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab fil-Hawd, Fath al-Baari, 11/464)

* al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Jaabir that the Messenger of Allaah said, ***"I entered Paradise where I saw ar-Rumaysa, the wife of Abu Talhah. And I heard footsteps and asked, "Who is that?" He (Jibreel) said, "That is Bilaal". And I saw a palace with women in its courtyard. I asked, "Whose is this?" They said, It is for 'Umar ibn al-Khattab"*** (Mishkaat al-Masaabih, 3/226)

Imaam Ahmed, Ibn Hibbaan and al-Haakim report from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The children of the believers are in Paradise, being cared for by Ibraahim (as)*** [and in the narration of Abu Nu'aym, ad-Dawylami, and Ibn Asakir it adds- ***"and Sarah, until they give them back to their parents on the day of Resurrection"***]

al-Bukhaari and Muslim also report from 'Abdullaah ibn 'Umar (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"When anyone of you dies, he will be shown his position morning and evening. If he is one of the people of Paradise then he will be one of the people of Paradise, and if he is one of the people of Hell, then he will be one of the people of Hell, and he will be told, "This is your position, until Allaah (swt) resurrects you on the Day of Resurrection".***

According to al-Muwatta of Imaam Maalik and as-Sunaan, Abu Dawood, "Ka'b ibn Maalik said the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Verily the soul of the believer is a bird hanging on to the trees of Paradise, until Allaah Swt returns it to its body on the day of Resurrection"***

This makes it clear that souls will enter Paradise before the Day of Resurrection.

As for the specious arguments of those who say that Hell has not been created yet, they say: If it was already created now, then it would of necessity have to come to an end of the Day of Resurrection and everyone in it would have to perish because Allaah says: **"Everything will perish save His Face"** (28:88) and "**Everyone shall taste death.."** (3:185) The response to this is: If you mean that Paradise does not exist until the Trumpet is blown and people are resurrected from their graves, then this is incorrect and is refuted by the evidence quoted above and other proofs which we have not mentioned here. If you mean that Allaah (swt) has not yet completed the creation of everything that He will prepare for the inhabitants of Paradise and that He is still creating more and more things in it, and that when the believers enter Paradise, Allaah (swt) will create even more things in it, then this is true and cannot be refuted, and the evidence that you give can only mean this, but when you use the aayah - **"Everything will perish save His Face"** - as evidence, your problem is that you misinterpret this aayah. Using it to prove that Paradise and Hell do not yet exist is like your colleagues using it to prove that they will both be destroyed and their inhabitants will all perish! You and your scholars did not understand the aayah properly; only the leaders (great scholars) of Islaam have understood it properly. They say that "everything" for which Allaah (swt) has decreed destruction and oblivion "will perish" but Paradise and Hell have been created to last forever and never pass away, as has the Throne, which forms the roof of Paradise.

"It was suggested that it meant that everything would perish except His dominion, or whatever was done for His sake. Another suggestion was that when Allaah (swt) revealed the word: "Whatever is on it will perish" - the angels said, "The people of earth are doomed", and hoped that they would remain. Allaah said that the people of heaven and earth would perish and said, **"And invoke not any other ilaah along with Allaah, Laa ilaaha illaa Huwaa. Everything will perish save His Face"** (28:88) because He is the Living and does not die. The angels realise that they too were destined to die. Their words should be taken in the light of and reconciled with other clear and unambiguous reports that prove that both Paradise and Hell are eternal".

(Sharh at-Tahaawiyyah, p.479, see also Siddeeq Hasan Khan, Yaqadhah ula al-'i'tibaar, p. 37 and 'Aqeedah as-Safarini 2/230)

The Keepers of Hell

Standing over Hell are MIGHTY and STERN angels who never disobey Allaah subhaanahu wa ta'ala Who has created them. They do whatever He commands them, as Allaah subhaanahu wa ta'ala says:

"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is men and stones, over which are [appointed] angels stern [and] severe, who flinch not [from executing] the Commands they receive from Allaah, but do [precisely what] they are commanded." (66:6)

Their number is nineteen as Allaah (swt) says:

"Soon I will cast him into Hellfire. And what will explain to you what Hellfire is? Naught does it permit to endure, and naught does it leave alone! Darkening and changing the colour of man! Over it are nineteen [angels as guardians and keepers of Hell]" (74:26-30)

This number was a challenge to the kuffaar who thought that they would easily overcome such a small number, but they did not realise that one of these angels has the strength to confront the whole of mankind on his own. For this reason, Allaah (swt) said in the next aayah:

"And We have set none but angels as guardians of the Fire, and We have fixed their numbers [19] only as a trial for the disbelievers.." (74:31)

Ibn Rajab said, *"What is known and well-established among the earlier and later generations (as-Salaf wal-Khalaf) is that the trial came about when the number of angels was mentioned and the kuffaar thought that it was possible to kill them. They thought that they would be able to fight and resist them. They did not know that humankind in its entireity would not be able to resist even ONE of them."* (at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.174)

These angels are the ones whom Allaah subhaanahu wa ta'ala called the guardians of Hell:

"Those in the Fire will say to the keepers [angels] of Hell: "Call upon your Rabb to lighten for us the torment for a day!" (40:49)

The Location of Hell

The scholars differ as to where Hell is located at present. Some say that it is in the lower earth, other say that it is in the heavens, and yet others refrain from discussing the matter at all. This last group is correct, because there are no sound and clear reports that define the location of Hell. One of those who prefer not to discuss the matter at all is al-Haafidh as-Suyuti who said, *"Do not discuss Hell, i.e. do not discuss where it is locaetd, for none knows this except Allaah (swt) and I know of no hadeeth that I could rely on with regard to this issue"*. (Siddiq Hasan Khan, Yaqazah uli al-I'tibar, p.47)

Sheikh Waliullaah ad-Dahlawee says in, his 'Aqeedah, *"There is no clear text which states their location (of Paradise and Hell). They are wherever Allaah (swt) wishes them to be, and we cannot comprehend all the universes created by Allaah (swt)"* (ibid, p.47). Siddeeq Hasan Khan says, commenting on these words, *"I say, that is the best and most cautious of opinions, inshaa'Allaah"* (ibid).

The Vast Extent of Hell

Hell is huge and vast and immensely deep, as is proven by several things:

(1) Those who will enter Hell are innumerable, yet one of them will be so huge that his molars will be as big as Mount Uhud, and the distance between his shoulders will be equivalent to three days walking. Nevertheless, Hell will accommodate the huge number of Kuffaar and evildoers who have existed throughout history, in spite of their huge size, and there will still be room for more, as Allaah says in the Qur'aan:

"On the Day when We will say to Hell: "Are you filled?" It will say: "Are there any more to come?" (50:30)

The Fire of Hell is like a mill to which are brought thousands upon thousands of tons of grain, which it grinds tirelessly until it is all done, then waits for more. In the hadith that describes the debate between Paradise and Hell, it says that Allaah (swt) said to Hell, "***You are My Punishment; I will punish in you whomsoever I will". Both Paradise and Hell will be filled, but Hell will not be filled until Allaah (swt) places His foot in it and it will say, "Enough, enough!".*** Then it will be filled and its different parts will come closer to one another. Allaah (swt) will not wrong any one of His Creation. Reported by al-Bukhaari and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah (ra) (Jaami' al-Usool, 10/544). [See the narration from Anas in al-Bukhaari, Muslim and Mishkaat ul-Masaabeeh, 3/109 with a similar meaning].

(2) Another indication of its vast depth is the fact that a stone thrown from the top of Hell takes a very long time to reach the bottom. Muslim reports that Abu Hurayrah (ra) said:

"We were with the Messenger of Allaah (saw) and we heard the sound of something falling. The Prophet (saw) said, "Do you know what that was?" We said, "Allaah and His Messenger know best". He said, "That was a stone that was thrown into Hell seventy years ago and it was falling through Hell until now". (Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab fi shiddat haar an-naar, 4/2184 no. 2844)

Haakim reports from Abu Hurayrah, and Tabaraani from Mu'aadh and Abu Umamah (ra) that the Prophet (Saw) said, ***"If there was a huge stone as big as seven khalifaat stones, and it was thrown from the edge of Hell it would fly through it for seventy years before it reached the bottom"***. (Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 5/58, no. 5124, Its isnaad is saheeh).

(3) The great number of angels who will bring Hell forth on the Day of Resurrection.

The Messenger (saw) described how Hell will be brought forth on the Day of Resurrection, concerning which Allaah (swt) said,

"And Hell will be brought near that Day". (89:23)

The Prophet (saw) said,

"Hell will be brought forth that Day by means of seventy thousand ropes, each of which will be held by seventy thousand angels." (reported by Muslim from 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ud, 4/2184 no.2842)

We can only image the vastness of this terrifying creation that requires such a huge number of strong and powerful angels whose strength is known only to Allaah!

(4) Another indication of the vastness of Hell is the fact that two great creations like the sun and moon will be two rolled-up bulls in Hell. at-Tahhaawee reports, in Mishkil al-Aathaar, that Salamah ibn 'Abdur-Rahman said, "Abu Hurayrah told us that the Prophet (saw) said:

"The sun and moon will be two rolled-up bulls in Hell on the Day of Resurrection" al-Bayhaqi also reported this in "al-Ba'th wal-Nushur", as did al-Bazzaar, al-Isma'ili and al-Khattaabi, with an isnaad that is saheeh according to the conditions of al-Bukhaari, who reported in al-Saheeh al-Mukhtasar, with the wording ***"The sun and moon will be rolled up in Hell of the day of Resurrection"***. (Sheikh Naasir ud-Deen al-Albaani narrated this hadeeth in Silsilah al-ahadeeth as-Saheehah, 1/32, hadith no:124)

The Levels of Hell

There are variations in the degrees of heat in Hell, and in the levels of punishment which Allaah (swt) has prepared for its inhabitants; there is not just one level.

As Allaah says:

"Verily the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths [grade] of the Fire" (4:145)

It is said that both Paradise and Hell have different levels; the lower the level in Hell, the greater the intensity of the heat. The hypocrites will suffer the worst punishment, and so they will be in the lowest level of Hell.

Allaah (swt) refers to the levels of Paradise and Hell in the Qur'aan:

"For all there will be degrees [or ranks] according to what they did" (6:132)

"Is then one who follows [seeks] the good pleasure of Allaah like the one who draws on himself the Wrath of Allaah? His abode is Hell - and worst, indeed, is that destination! They are in varying grades with Allaah, and Allaah is All-Seer of what they do". (3:162-3)

'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Zayd ibn Aslam said, *"The levels of paradise go up and the levels of Hell go down"* [Ibn Rajab, at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.5]. It was reported from some of the Salaf that the sinners amongst the monotheists who enter Hell would be in the first level, the Jews would be in the second level, the Christians in the third level, the Sabians in the fourth level, the Magians in the fifth level, the polytheist Arabs in the sixth level and the hypocrites in the seventh level (1) Some books give names to these levels: the first is called Jahanam, the second Ladhaa, the third al-Hutamah, the fourth as-Sa'eer, the fifth Saqar, the sixth al-Jaheem, and the seventh al-Hawiyah.

There is no proof for this division of the inhabitants of Hell or the names that have been attributed to the various levels. The truth is that all of these names - Jahanam, Ladhaa, al-Hutamah, etc - are alternative names by which Hell in its entirety is known, and they are not applied to one part or another of it. It is also known that people will be placed in different levels of Hell according to the extent of their kufr and sins.

Footnotes

(1) If this division is based on our understanding of the texts that indicate the evil of the various groups, then it needs to be revised, for the Magians who worship fire are no less sinners than the Arab polytheists. It is better not to engage in speculation about matters that were not discussed in the nusoos (texts).

The Gates of Hell

Allaah has told us that Hell has seven gates, as He (swt) said:

"And surely, Hell is the promised place for them all. It [Hell] has seven gates, for each of these gates is a [special] class [of sinners] assigned". (15:43-44)

Ibn Katheer commenting on this aayah, said: *"This means that each gate has been allotted its share of the followers of Iblees who will enter it, and the will not be able to avoid it. May Allaah (swt) protect us from it. Each will enter a gate according to his deeds, and will be assigned to a level of Hell according to his deeds."*

It was reported from 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib (ra) that he said, during a khutbah (sermon): *"The gates of Hell are such and-such".* Abu Harun said, "*They are in layers, one above the other". It is reported that he also said, "The gates of Hell number seven, one above the other. The first will be filled, then the second, then the third, until all of them are filled."* (Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/162)

When the disbelievers come to Hell, its gates will be opened, and they will enter it, to remain there forever:

"And those who disbelieved will be driven to Hell in groups, till, when they reach it, the gates thereof will be opened [suddenly like a prison at the arrival of the prisoners]. And its keepers will say, "Did not the Messengers come to you from yourselves - reciting to you the Verses of your Rabb, and warning you of the Meeting of this Day of yours". They will say, "Yes" but the Word of torment has been justified against the disbelievers". (39:71)

After they are admitted, they will be told:

"Enter you the gates of Hell, to abide therein. And [indeed] what an evil abode of the arrogant!" (39:72)

These gates will be shut upon the evildoers, and they will have no hope of ever escaping from them after that, as Allaah (swt) says, **"But those who reject Our Signs, they are the [unhappy] Companions of the Left Hand. On them will be Fire vaulted over [all round]."** (90:19-20)

Ibn 'Abbaas said, "vaulted" (literally: "shut over them") means that the gates will be locked". al-Mujaahid pointed out that the word used (mu'sadah) is the word used in the dialect of Quraysh to mean "locked" or shut" (Tafseer Ibn Katheer 7/298)

In the Qur'aan Allaah (swt) says:

"Woe to every [kind of] scandalmonger and backbiter, who piles up wealth and lays it by. Thinking that his wealth would make him last forever! By no means! He will be sure to be thrown into that which Breaks to Pieces. And what will explain to you that which breaks to pieces? The Fire of [the wrath of] Allaah, kindled [to a blaze], which mounts [right] to the heart. It shall be made into a vault over them, in columns outstretched." (104:1-9)

Allaah (swt) states that the gates of Hell will be locked behind them. Ibn Abbaas said, *"In columns outstretched" means that the gates will be stretched out"*. 'Atiyah said, "*It is a pillar of iron*". Muqaatil said, *"The gates will be closed firmly behind them and locked with a bolt of iron, so that the pain and heat will be intensified. The expression "stretched forth" applies to the "pillar", meaning that the bolts with which the*

gates are locked will be very long, because a long bolt is stronger than a short one" (Ibn Rajab, at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.61)

The gates of Hell may be opened and closed before the Day of Judgement. The Prophet (Saw) told us that the gates of Hell are locked during the month of Ramadhan. at-Tirmidhi reported that Abu Hurayrah said the Prophet (saw) said: ***"When the first night of Ramadhan comes, the Shayaateen and evil jinns are chained up. The gates of Hell are closed and not one of them is opened. The gates of Paradise are opened and not one of them is closed."*** (Ibid, p.66)

The Fuel of Hell

Stones and the rebellious disbelievers are the fuel of Hell, as Allaah says:

"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is men and stones!" (66:6)

"...then fear the Fire [hell] whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers" (2:24)

What is meant by the people who will be fuel for the Fire is the disbelievers and polytheists. As for the type of stone that will fuel the Fire, Allaah (swt) knows best what it really is. Some of the Salaf thought that this stone was brimstone or sulphur. 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'oud said, *"It is a stone of sulphur which Allaah (swt) created in the first heaven the day He created the heavens and earth and prepared it for the disbelievers"*. This was reported by Ibn Jareer, Ibn Abi Haatim and Haakim in al-Mustadrak. Ibn 'Abbaas, Mujaahid and Ibn Juryayj were also of this opinion. (Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 1/107)

If this opinion was based on something that the Prophet (saw) had said then we could accept it without hesitation or argument. If it is the matter of ijtihaad, based on knowledge of the nature and qualities of stones, then we cannot accept it without question. There may be other stones that are superior to sulphur in strength and flammability. The first Muslims saw that sulphur has qualities that do not exist in other stones, so they thought that it would be the fuel of Hell. Ibn Rajab said, "Most of the mufassireen suggest that what is meant by stones is sulphur, with which the Fire of Hell will be fuelled. It was said that it includes five kinds of torment that are not found in other stones: it catches fire quickly, it has an unpleasant odour, it produces a lot of smoke, it sticks to flesh, and it is very hot when it is heated" (Ibn Rajab, at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.107). Allaah may create other kinds of stones that are superior to sulphur, and we can be sure that whatever exists in the Hereafter will be different from this world.

Another fuel for the Fire will be the gods, which were worshipped instead of Allaah (swt);

"Certainly! You [disbelievers] and that which you are worshipping now besides Allah, are [but] fuel for Hell! [Surely] you will enter it. Had these [idols etc] been aaliha [gods] they would not have entered there [Hell] and all of them will abide therein." (21:98-99)

"al-Jawhaari said, *"Everything that is used to feed the Fire or increase it is its fuel"*. Abu Ubaydah said, "*Everything that you throw into the Fire is fuel for it"* (Yaqazah uli al-i'tibaar, p.61)

The Intensity of Its Heat and the Vastness of Its Smoke and Sparks

Allaah (swt) says:

"And those on the left hand - who will be those on the Left Hand? In fierce hot wind and boiling water. And shadow of black smoke, [that shadow] neither cool, nor [even] good". (56:41-44)

This aayah includes all of the things that people avail themselves of in this world when it is too hot; these three things are: water, air and shade. But the aayah states that these three things will be of no help whatsoever to the people of Hell. The air of Hell is al-Sumoom, which is an intensely hot wind; its water is al-Hameem, boiling water; its shade is al-Yahmoom, which is a part of the smoke of Hell. (at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.85)

Just as this aayah emphasises the horrifying position of those on the Left Hand, who are the people of Hell, another aayah emphasises the horror of Hell itself. Allaah (swt) says:

"But he whose balance [of good deeds] will be [found] light, will have his home in a [bottomless] pit. And what will explain to you what this is? [It is] a Fire blazing fiercely!" (101:8-11)

The shade referred to in the aayah **"and the shadow of black smoke"** (56:43) is the shade cast by the smoke of Hell. Shade usually makes one feel cool and comfortable, and people love to feel it, but this shade [in Hell] will neither be cool nor pleasant; it is the shadow of black smoke.

The Qur'aan tells us that this shade is the smoke of Hell which rises above the Fire:

""Depart you to a shadow [of smoke ascending] in three columns, [which yields] no shade of coolness and is of no use against the Fierce Blaze". Indeed! It [Hell] throws about sparks [huge] as forts, as if there were [a string of] yellow camels [marching swiftly]." (77:30-33)

This aayah states that the smoke that rises from Hell is so great that it is divided into three columns. It gives shade, but it is not cooling and it offers no protection from the Raging Fire. The sparks that fly from this Fire are like huge castles, and they are likened to yellow or black camels.

Allaah (swt) explained how strong this Fire is, and how it affects the tormented:

"Soon I will cast him into Hellfire. And what will explain to you exactly what Hellfire is? Naught does it permit to endure, and naught does it leave alone! Darkening and changing the colour of man!" (74:26-29)

The Fire consumes all, destroying everything and leaving nothing untouched. It burns skin, reaching to the bone, melting the contents of the stomach and exposing what is innermost.

The Prophet (saw) told us: ***"Fire as we know it is one-seventieth part of the Fire of Hell." Someone said, "O Messenger of Allaah (saw), it is enough as it is!"*** He said, ***"It [the fire of Hell] is as if sixty nine equal portions were added to the fire as we know it.***" (al-Bukhaari)

This Fire never dies down, no matter how much time passes:

"So taste you [the results of your evil actions]; no increase shall We give you, except in torment". (78:30)

"...whenever it abates, We shall increase for them the fierceness of the Fire". (17:97)

The disbelievers will not taste the luxury of respite, and the torment will not be lessened for them no matter how long it lasts:

"Their torment shall not be lightened nor shall they be helped". (2:86)

The Fire is rekindled every day as is stated in the hadith reported by Muslim from 'Amr ibn 'Absah (ra) who said:

"The Prophet (saw) said, ***"Pray salaat as-subh (the early morning prayer) then stop praying when the sun is rising until it is fully up, for it rises between the horns of Shaytaan and the disbelievers prostrate to the sun at that time. Then pray, for the prayer is witnessed (by the angels) until the shadow becomes the length of a lance. Then cease prayer, for at that time Hell is heated up. Then when the shadow moves forward, pray.."***

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet said, ***"When it becomes very hot, wait until it cools down to pray, because the intense heat is a breeze from Hell".***

The Fire of Hell will be further refuelled on the Day of Resurrection when it receives its inhabitants:

"And when Hellfire shall be kindled to a fierce blaze, and when Paradise shall be brought near". (81:12-13)

Hell can Speak and See

Whoever reads the descriptions of Hell in the Qur'aan and hadiths will discover that it is a creation that can see, speak and complain. The Qur'aan tells us that Hell will be able to see its people from afar when they are coming towards it, and it will start to utter terrifying cries that will indicate how much anger and hatred it feels towards these evildoers:

"When it [Hell] sees them from a far place, they will hear its raging and roaring". (25:12)

Ibn Jareer reports that Ibn 'Abbaas said:

"A man will be dragged towards Hell, which will shrink into itself. Allaah (swt) will say: "What is the matter with you?" It will say, "He is seeking refuge with you from me". He will say, "Release My slave". Another man will be dragged towards Hell and it will send out a gust of air like a mule snorting at a camel, then it will take in a gust of air and there will be no-one left except it will terrify him". (Ibn Katheer quoted this report in an-Nihaayah, 2/21, and said that its isnaad is saheeh).

Imaam Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi report from Abu Salih from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said:

"On the Day of Resurrection a neck will stretch forth from Hell; it will have two eyes to see, two ears to hear, and a tongue to speak. It will say, "I have been appointed to take care of three types of people: every arrogant tyrant, every person who called on some deity other than Allaah (swt) and those who made pictures" (at-Tirmidhi stated that this hadith was saheeh - at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.179, See also Jaami' al-Usool, 10/518, the editor said its isnaad is hasan).

Ibn 'Umar's Vision of Hell

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report that Ibn 'Umar said, *"I saw in a dream that two angels came to me. Each of them was holding a whip of iron in his hand. Then I met (another) angel who was also holding a whip of iron in his hand. They said, "Do not worry, you are a good man; we just wish that you prayed more at night". They took me to the edge of Hell, which looked like a well with horns: between every two horns stood an*

angel holding a whip of iron. I saw men hanging upside-down, held with chains, and I recognised some men of Quraysh. Then they led me away, towards the right. I told Hafsah about my dream, and she told the Messenger of Allaah (saw) who said, "Abdullaah is a righteous man". (at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.51)

Does Anybody See Hell in Reality Before the Day of Resurrection?

We know that our Prophet (saw) saw Hell, just as he saw Paradise during his lifetime. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from 'Abdullaah ibn 'Abbaas that the Prophet (saw) said concerning Salaat al-Khusf (eclipse prayer):

"I saw Paradise and I reached out to take a bunch of its fruits. If I had managed to do so you would have eaten from it until the end of time. And I saw Hell, and I have never seen anything more terrifying. I saw that most of its inhabitants are women". (Mishkaat al-Masabeeh, 1/480)

Imaam Ahmad reports from al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"Hell was brought so close to me that I tried to blow its heat away from my face. I saw there the man with the stick with the crooked end, and one who had tended al-Baheerah (a she-camel let loose for pasture for idols, upon which nothing was allowed to be carried), and the man of Humayr and the woman who had imprisoned the cat". (Saheeh al-Jaami', 2/181 #1968)

Muslim reports from Jaabir (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said:

"Paradise and Hell were shown to me. Paradise was brought close to me, so that I tried to take fruit from it but I could not reach it. Hell was shown to me, and was brought so close that I stepped back for fear that it would touch me. I saw a Humayr woman who was tall and black, being punished on account of a cat that she owned: she had tied it up, not giving it anything to eat or drink, or allowing it to eat of the vermin of the earth. I also saw Abu Thumaamah 'Umar ibn Maalik being dragged by his trachea through Hell". (Saheeh al-Jaami', 2/298, #2394)

After people die they are shown, in al-Barzakh (the period between death and Judgement) their position in Paradise (if they are believers) or Hell (If they are disbelievers).

How Hell Affects this Earth and its Inhabitants

al-Bukhaari reports in his saheeh that Abu Hurayrah said:

"Hell complained to its Rabb, saying "O my Rabb, some parts of me have consumed others." So He allowed it to exhale twice, once in the winter and once in the summer. That is why you find extreme heat (in the summer) and extreme cold (in the winter)".

al-Bukhaari also narrated from Abu Sa'eed (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said:

"Delay your prayers until it cools down, for the intensity of heat is from the exhaled air of Hell". (Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Bad' al-Khalq, Baab Siffaat an-naar wa annaha makhluqah and Fath al-Baari 6/330. The author of Jaami' al-Usool 10/517 attributed these two reports to al-Bukhaari, Muslim and at-Tirmidhi).

The People of Hell and Their Evil Deeds

1. The People Who Will Abide Therein Forever

The people of Hell who will abide therein forever, never leaving it and never dying, are the disbelievers and polytheists. Allaah (swt) says:

"But those who reject Allaah, for them will be the Fire of Hell. No term shall be determined for them, so they should die, nor shall its penalty be lightened for them". (35:36)

"But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be companions [or dwellers] of the Fire; they shall abide therein". (2:39)

"Verily those who reject faith and die rejecting - on them is Allaah's Curse and the Curse of the Angels and of all mankind. They will abide therein: their penalty will not be lightened, nor will respite be their lot." (2:161-162)

"Know they not that for those who oppose Allaah and His Messenger is the Fire of Hell - wherein they shall dwell? That is the supreme disgrace". (9:63)

"It is not for such as join gods with Allaah to visit or maintain the Mosques of Allaah while they witness against their own souls to infidelity [or disbelief]. The works of such bear no fruit: In Fire shall they dwell." (9:17)

Because they will abide therein forever, Allaah (swt) described the torment of Hell as a lasting torment, one that will never end, one that is eternal:

"Their wish will be to get out of the Fire, but never will they get out therefrom: their Penalty will be one that endures". (5:37)

"At length it will be said to the wrongdoers: "Taste you the enduring punishment! You get but the recompense of what you earned!" (10:52)

Death will be slaughtered, as is stated in the hadith narration from Ibn 'Umar by al-Bukhaari and in Muslim from Abu Sa'eed who said:

"The Messenger of Allaah of Allaah (saw) said: ***"Death will be brought like a horned ram, and will be made to stand between Paradise and Hell". It will be said, "O people of Paradise, do you know what this is?" They will raise their heads and look, and will say, "Yes, this is death". It will be said, "O people of Hell, do you know what this is?" They will raise their heads and look, and will say, "Yes, this is death". Then the command will be given for death to be slaughtered. Then it will be said, "O people of Paradise, it is eternal, there is no death. O people of Hell, it is eternal, there is no death".*** Then the Messenger of Allaah (saw) recited:

"And warn them of the Day of Grief and regrets when the case has been decided, while [now] they are in a state of carelessness, and they believe not". (19:39)

and in the narration of at-Tirmidhi, Abu Sa'eed al-Khudree added: ***"If any were to die of joy it would be the people of Paradise and if any were to die of despair, it would be the people of Hell".*** (at-Tirmidhi, said "This is a sahih hasan hadith").

2. Hell will be the Dwelling Place of the Kuffar and Mushrikeen

Because the disbelievers and polytheists will remain in Hell forever, it is considered to be their abode or dwelling place, just as Paradise is the abode of the believers:

"Their abode will be the Fire; and evil is the home of the wrongdoers" (3:151)

"Their abode is the Fire, because of the [evil] they earned". (10:8)

"Is there not a home in Hell for those who reject Faith?" (29:68)

Hell is abode that they deserve:

"Your abode is the Fire: that is the proper place to claim you..." (57:15)

Hell is the worst abode and destination:

"But for the wrongdoers will be an evil place of [final] Return! - they will burn therein - an evil bed [indeed to lie on]!" (38:55-56)

3. Those Who Call Others to Hell

Those who follow misguided beliefs and ideologies that contradict the laws of Allaah (Swt) and those who believe in their false causes, these are the ones who call others to Hell:

"Those [unbelievers] do [but] beckon you to the Fire.." (2:221)

"And We made them [but] leaders inviting to the Fire; and on the Day of Judgement no help shall they find". (28:41)

One of them is Shaytaan:

"..[would they do so] even if it is Shaytaan beckoning them to the Penalty of the [Blazing] Fire?" (31:21)

"He [Shaytaan} only invites his adherents that they may become Companions of the blazing Fire" (35:6)

Those who call others to the Fire in this world will lead their people and their followers to the Fire in the Hereafter. An example is Pharaoh:

"He will go before his people on the Day of Judgement, and lead them into the Fire." (11:98)

All evil leaders who call people to their belief systems that go against Islaam are in fact calling people to the Fire of Hell, because the only way to escape the Fire of Hell and enter Paradise is to follow the path of Faith:

"And O my people! [strange] it is for me to call you to salvation while you call me to the Fire!" (40:41)

This man's people were calling him to the kufr and shirk of Pharaoh while he was calling them to Tawheed and faith in Allaah (swt). Because the kuffaar invite people to the Fire, Allaah (swt) forbade believing men to marry mushrik women, just as He forbade believing women to marry mushrik men:

"And do not marry unbelieving (literally, polytheist) women until they believe. A slave woman who believes is better than a [free] unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Nor marry [your girls] to unbelievers until they believer; a male slave who believes is better than a [free] unbeliever, even though he allures you. Those [unbelievers] do [but] beckon you to the Fire, but Allaah invites by His Grace to the Garden [of Bliss] and forgiveness, and makes His Signs clear to mankind that they may receive admonition" (2:221)

The Worst Evil Deeds of Those Who Will Remain Forever in Hell

The Qur'aan speaks at length of the evil deeds for which those who will abide in the Hell forever deserve their never-ending fate. Here we will mention the most serious of them.

(1) Kufr and Shirk: Allaah (swt) tells us that it will be said to those who disbelieved, when they are in the Fire, that Allaah's hatred of them will be greater than their own hatred towards themselves because of their disbelief. Then He explains that their eternal fate in Hell is because of their kufr and shirk:

"The unbelievers will be addressed: "Greater was the aversion of Allaah to you than [is] your aversion to yourselves, seeing that you were called to the Faith but you used to refuse. They will say, "Our Rabb! Twice have You made us without life, and twice have You given us life! Now have we recognised our sins: is there any way out [of this]?" [The answer will be]: "This is because, when Allaah was invoked as the Only [object of worship] you did reject Faith, but when partners were joined to Him, you believed! The Command is only with Allaah, All-High, All-Great!" (40:10-12)

Allaah (swt) tells us that the keeper of Hell will ask the kuffaar as they are approaching Hell:

"Did there not come to you your messengers with clear signs?" (40:50)

The response will be that they deserved Hell because they disbelieved in the Messengers and their Message:

"They will say, "Yes indeed; a Warner did come to us, but we rejected him" and said: "Allaah never sent down any [Message] you are in nothing but a great error!" (67:9)

Concerning those who disbelieved in the Qur'aan, Allaah (swt) says:

"for We have sent you a Message from Our own presence. If any do turn away therefrom, verily they will bear a burden on the Day of Judgement. They will abide in this [state] and grievous will that burden be to them on that Day". (20:99-101)

Concerning those who disbelieve the Qur'aan and associate partners with Allaah (swt), Allaah (swt) says:

"Those who reject the Book and the [Revelations] with which We sent Our Messengers: but soon shall they know, when the yokes [shall be] round their necks, and the chains, they shall be dragged along. In the boiling fetid fluid, then in the Fire shall they be burned. Then shall it be said to them, "Where are the deities to which you gave part-worship in derogation to Allaah? They will reply: "They have left us in the lurch. Nay, we invoked not, of old, anything [that had real existence]." Thus does Allaah leave the unbelievers to stray. That was because you were want to rejoice on the earth in things other than the Truth, and that you were want to be ignorant. Enter the gates of Hell, to dwell therein and evil is [this] abode of the arrogant". (40:70-76)

Concerning those kuffaar and mushrikeen who regarded their gods as equal to the Rabb of the Worlds, Allaah (swt) says:

"Then they will be thrown headlong into the [Fire] - they and those straying in Evil and the whole hosts of Iblees together. They will say there in their mutual bickerings: "By Allaah, we were truly in an error manifest, when we held you [false gods] as equals with the Rabb of the Worlds" (26:94-98)

Concerning the fate on the Day of Judgement of those who disbelieved, Allaah said:

"If you do marvel [at their want of faith] strange is their saying: "When we are [actually] dust, shall we indeed then be a creation renewed?" They are those who disbelieve in their Rabb! They are those around whose necks will be yokes [of servitude]. They will be Companions of the Fire to dwell therein [for aye]!" (13:5)

"..their abode will be Hell; every time it shows abatement, We shall increase for them the fierceness of the Fire. That is their recompense, because they rejected Our Signs and said, "When we are reduced to bones and broken fragments, should we really be raised up [to be] a new creation?" (17:97-98)

(2) Failing to fulfill the legislated duties, as well as denying the Day of Judgement. Allaah (swt) tells us that the people of Paradise will ask the people of Hell:

"What led you into Hellfire?" (74:42)

They will reply: "..We were not of those who prayed, Nor were we of those who fed the indigent, But we used to talk vanities with vain talkers, And we used to deny the Day of Judgement, Until there came to us [the Hour] that is certain." (74:43-47)

(3) Obeying the misguided leaders of kufr and accepting the principles by means of which they mislead people and turn them away from the religion of Allaah (swt) as taught by the Prophets:

"And We have destined for them intimate companions [of like nature] who made alluring to them what was before them and what was behind them. And the Sentence among the previous generations of jinns and men who have passed away, is proved against them; for they are utterly lost. The unbelievers say: "Listen not to this Qur'aan but talk at random in the midst of its [reading] that you may gain the upper hand!" But We shall certainly give the unbelievers a taste of a severe penalty, and We shall requite them the worst of their deeds. Such is the requital of the enemies of Allaah - the Fire, therein will be for them the eternal home, a [fit] requital for that they used to reject Our Signs" (41:25-28)

When the kuffaar are thrown into Hell they will be filled with regret for having disobeyed Allaah and His Messenger and having followed their masters and leaders:

"Verily Allaah has cursed the unbelievers and has prepared for them a blazing Fire, to dwell therein; no protector will they find, nor helper. The Day that their faces will be turned upside down in the Fire, they will say, "Woe to us! Would that we had obeyed Allaah and obeyed the Messenger". And they would say, "Our Rabb! We obeyed our chiefs and our great ones and they misled us as from the [Right] Path". (33:64-67)

(4) Hypocrisy

Allaah promised Hell to the hypocrites, a promise that He has taken upon Himself to never break:

"Allaah has promised the hypocrites, men and women, and the rejecters of Faith, the fire of Hell, therein shall they dwell. Sufficient is it for them. For them is the curse of Allaah and an enduring punishment." (9:68)

He has told us that the position of the hypocrites is the lowest level of Hell, which si where the heat and agony are most intense:

"The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire; no helper will you find for them". (4:145)

(5) Arrogance:

This is a quality shared by most of the people of Hell. Allaah (swt) says:

"But those who reject Our Signs and treat them with arrogance - they are the Companions (dwellers) of the Fire, to dwell therein [forever]" (7:36)

Muslim devoted a chapter of his Saheeh to this issue, entitled Baab an-Naar Yadhkhulha al-Jabbaaroon wal-Jannah yadkhuluha ad-du'afaa (Hell will be entered by the arrogant and Paradise will be entered by the weak). In this chapter he refers to the debate between Paradise and Hell, what they said and what Allaah (swt) sad to them. Muslim quotes the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah (ra) which goes back to the Prophet (saw), in which it is stated that Hell said, "***The arrogant and proud will enter me."*** According to another report, Hell said, ***"I will become rich (have too many) from the proud and arrogant"***. Allaah (swt) said, ***"You are My Punishment with which I will punish whomsoever I will".*** (Sahih Muslim, 4/2186, no. 2846)

al-Bukhaari, Muslim and at-Tirmidhi report from Harithah ibn Wahb that the Messenger of Allaah (swt) said:

"Shall I not tell you about the people of Paradise? Every meek person who is considered to be so humble that if he were to adjure something by Allaah (swt), He would fulfil it for him. Shall I not tell you about the people of Hell? Every haughty, greedy and proud person." (Jaami' al-Usool, 10/547, no. 8111)

According to a report given by Muslim, he (saw) said, ***"Every proud mean and arrogant person".*** This is confirmed by the Qur'aan

"Is there not in Hell an abode for the Haughty [i.e. arrogant]?" (39:60)

"But today shall you be recompensed with a penalty of humiliation for that you were arrogant on earth without just cause, and that you [ever] transgressed" (48:20)

"Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds, and had preferred the life of this world, the Abode will be Hellfire" (79:37-39)

The Evil Deeds that Lead One to Hell

Sheikh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah (swt) have mercy on him, was asked: "What are the deeds of the people of Hell and what are the deeds of the people of Paradise?" He replied, *"The deeds of the people of Hell are:*

- associating partners in worship with Allaah (swt)
- disbelieving in His Messenger
- kufr (ingratitude, disbelief)
- hasad (malicious envy)
- lying
- treachery
- oppression and wrongdoing (dhulm)
- promiscuity
- backstabbing
- cutting off the ties of kinship
- cowardice at the time of jihad
- miserliness
- inconsistency between what is in one's heart and the face one shows to people
- despairing of the mercy of Allaah (swt)
- feeling secure from the plan of Allaah (swt)
- panicking blindly at the time of crisis
- pride and extravagance at the time of plenty
- abandoning one's duties towards Allaah (swt)
- transgressing His limits
- violating His sanctity
- fearing a created being instead of the Creator
- showing off
- going against the Qur'aan and Sunnah in word or deed
- obeying a created being in some act of disobedience to the Creator
- blindly supporting falsehood
- mocking the signs of Allaah (swt)
- rejecting the truth
- withholding knowledge and testimony that should be revealed
- witchcraft and magic
- disobeying one's parents
- killing any soul forbidden by Allaah (swt) except for reasons of justice
- consuming the wealth of the orphan
- riba (usury)
- desertion from the battlefield
- slandering the reputation of innocent, chaste, believing women" (Yaqadhat uli al-I'tibar, p.222)

The Messenger of Allaah (saw) mentioned all the sins that will lead one to Hell. Muslim reports from 'Iyadh bin Himaar that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, during a lengthy khutbah:

"..the people of Hell are five: the weak who lack the power to (avoid evil); the (carefree) who pursue (everything irrespective of whether it is good or evil) and who have no concern for their families or their wealth; the dishonest people whose greed cannot be concealed even in the case of minor things; and those who betray you, morning and evening, with regard to your family and your property. He also mentioned misers, liars and those who are in the habit of abusing people and using obscene, foul language". (Muslim in Kitaab al-Jannah wa Sifaat Na'imihaa Baab as-Sifaat allaatee yu'raf bihaa fid-dunyaa ahl al-Jannah wa ahl an-Naar, 4/2197 no. 2865)

Specific People Who Will Be In Hell

The kuffaar and mushikreen will be in Hell, no doubt about it, but the Qur'aan and hadith also mention specific people who will be in the Fire. One of them is the Pharaoh who ruled at the time of Musa (as):

"He [Pharaoh] will go before his people on the Day of Judgement, and will lead them into the Fire.." (11:98)

Also included are the wives of Nuh (as) and Lut (as):

"Allaah sets forth for an example to the unbelievers, the wife of Nuh and the wife of Lut. They were [respectively] under two of Our righteous slaves, but they were false to their [husbands] and they profited nothing before Allaah on their account, but were told: "Enter the Fire, along with those who enter!" (66:10)

Abu Lahab and his wife are also among those mentioned specifically:

"Perish the hands of the Father of Flame [Abu Lahab]! Perish he! No profit to him from all his wealth and all his gains! Burnt soon will he be in a Fire of blazing flames! His wife shall carry the [crackling] wood, as fuel! A twisted rope of palm fibre round her [own] neck!" (111:1-5)

Another of them is 'Amr ibn 'Aamir al-Khuzaa'i, whom the Prophet (saw) being disembowelled in Hell (sahih hadith narrated by al-Bukhaari, Muslim, Ahmad); and the one who killed 'Ammar and plundered his possessions. A report with a Saheeh isnaad quoted in Mu'jam at-Tabaraani from 'Amr ibn al-'Aas, and his son states that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The one who killed 'Ammaar and plundered his possessions will be in Hell"***. (Saheeh al-Jaami', 4/110, #4170)

The Disbelievers Among the Jinn Will Be In Hell

The disbelievers among the jinn will enter Hell just like the disbelievers among mankind, for the jinn are held responsible for their actions just as human beings are:

"And I have only created jinns and men that they may worship Me [alone]" (51:56)

On the Day of Resurrection, the jinn and mankind will be gathered alike:

"And on the Day when He will gather them [all] together, [and say]: "O assembly of jinns! Many did you mislead of men" (6:128)

"So by your Rabb, without doubt, We shall gather them together, and [also] the Evil Ones [with them], then We shall bring them forth on their knees round about Hell. Then shall We certainly drag out from every sect all those who were worst in obstinate rebellion against Allaah the All-Gracious. And certainly We know best those who are most worthy of being burned therein". (19:68-70)

Then Allaah (swt) will tell the disbelieving jinn:

"Enter in the company of nations who passed away before you, of men and jinns into the Fire". (7:38)

Then they will be thrown on their faces in Hell:

"Then they will be thrown headlong into the [Fire], they and those straying in evil. And the whole hosts of Iblis together". (26:94-95)

Thus Allaah's promise that Hell will be filled with the disbelievers among the jinn and mankind will be fulfilled:

"..And the word of your Rabb shall be fulfilled: "Surely I will fill Hell with jinns and men all together" (11:119)

"And the Sentence among the previous generations of jinns and men that had passed away is proved against them.." (41:25)

Those Who Will Not Remain in Hell Forever

(1) Definition: Those who will enter Hell and be brought forth at a later time are the monotheists who did not associate anything with Allaah (swt) but they committed many sins that far outweigh their good deeds. They will enter Hell for a period known only to Allaah (swt), then they will be brought forth through the intercession of those who intercede, and Allaah (swt) will bring forth, through His Mercy, people who never did any good at all.

(2) The Sins for which Allaah (swt) has promised Hell -

Here we will mention some of the sins which the Qur'aan and Hadeeth state will earn the punishment of Hell:

(i) Following groups and sects that go against the Sunnah

Abu Dawood, ad-Daarami, Ahmad, al-Haakim and others narrate that Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan said:

"The Messenger of Allaah (swt) stood up among us and said: ***"There were some among the People of the Book before you who divided into seventy-two sects. This nation will divide into seventy-three sects, seventy-two of whom will be in Hellfire, and only one in Paradise. (This group) is al-Jamaa'ah"***

This is a sahih hadith. After mentioning its various asaanid (chain of narrator), al-Haakim remarked, "These asaanid prove that this hadith is sahih". Adh-Dhahabi agreed with him. Sheikh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah said, "It is a mashhoor sahih hadith al-Shatibee said in al-I'tisaam that it is sahih. Sheikh Naasir ud-Deen al-Albaani listed its asaanid and stated that it is without a doubt sahih. (See Silsilat al-Ahadith as-Saheehah, hadith no. 204)

Siddeeq Hasan Khan suggested that the extra wording in the hadith, ***"all of them are doomed except one***" or ***"seventy two are in the Fire"***, was a da'eef addition. He transmitted this opinion from his Shaykh, ash-Shawkaani, who narrated it from Ibn al-Wazeer and Ibn Hazm before him. He approved the opinion of one who said, *"This addition is one of the fabrications of the atheists because it puts people off Islaam and scares them away from embracing it."* (Yaqadhaat ul al-I'tibaar, p.206)

Sheikh Naasir ud-Deen al-Albaani refuted the opinion that this addition is da'eef on two counts:

(a) Scholarly critical examination of the hadith indicates that this addition is Sahih so the opinion that it is da'eef carries no weight.

(b) Those who say that it is sahih are greater in number and more knowledgeable than Ibn Hazm, who is well-known among the scholars for being extremely strict in his criticism. His opinion should not be taken as

evidence if he is the only one who says so, even if there is no conflict, so how can it be taken as evidence when it differs from everyone else's view?

Ibn al-Wazeer rejects the hadith on the grounds of its meaning rather than its isnaad. Siddeeq Hasan Khan spoke on this in Yaqadhaat uli al-I'tibaar explaining that the indication of this addition is that those of this ummah who will enter Paradise are few in number, whereas well-proven Sahih texts indicate that those of this ummah who will enter Paradise are very many, so many that they will be half the population of Paradise:

This may be reconciled in the following ways:

a) Dividing the ummah into seventy-three sects does not mean that most of this ummah will be in Hell, because most of its ummah are `awaam ("rank and file") who are not counted among those sects. Those who deviated and established rules that contradict the Sunnah are few in number when compared to those who avoided falling into that trap.

(b) Not everyone who differs from Ahl as-Sunnah is SOME issue is counted as contradicting the Sunnah. What is meant is those people who adopted rules that made them a separate, independent group and caused them to abandon many texts of the Qur'aan and Sunnah, like the Khawaarij, the Mu'tazilah and Rawaafidh.

As for those who adopt the Qur'aan and Sunnah and do not deviate from them, if they differ in some matter it does not mean that they are counted as one of the (doomed) sects.

(c) This addition indicates that all other sects will enter Hell, but that does not necessarily mean that they will abide therein forever.

It is well known that some of these sects are kuffar and will abide eternally in Hell, like the extreme Baatinis who make a show of faith whilst concealing kufr in their hearts, and the Ismaa'ilis, Druze, Nusayris and so on.

There are others who differ from Ahl as-Sunnah in some serious issues, but that does not mean they are kuffaar. They have no definite guarantee of entering Paradise. Allaah (swt) may forgive them or punish them as He wills. They made do some righteous deeds that will save them from Hell, or they may be saved by the intercession of those who intercede, or they may enter Hell and remain there for as long as Allaah (swt) wills, then be brought forth through the intercession of those who intercede and the Mercy of the Most Merciful.

(ii) Refusing to Migrate for the Sake of Allaah

Muslims are not permitted to remain in Daar al-Kufr if there are Muslim countries to which they could migrate (NB: or if it becomes waajib on them to make hijrah) especially when staying in Daar al-Kufr exposes them to trials and temptations. Allaah (swt) will not accept any excuse from those who refused to migrate:

"When the angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: "In what [plight] were you?" They reply, "Weak and oppressed were we in the earth". They [the angels] say: "Was not the earth of Allaah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away from evil?" Such men will find their abode in Hell - what an evil refuge [or destination]! Except those who are really weak and oppressed - men, women and children, who have no means in their power, nor [a guide post] to direct their way". (4:97-98)

Allaah (swt) will not excuse any of them (NB: upon whom hijrah was OBLIGATORY) except those weak and oppressed person who had no means of migrating and could find no way of moving to Islaamic lands.

(iii) Judging Unjustly

Allaah (swt) revealed the Shari'ah to establish justice among mankind, and He commanded His slaves to be Just:

"Verily Allaah commands the justice [and] the doing of good.." (16:90)

He has made it obligatory for rulers and judges to be just and never to be unfair:

"Allaah commands you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice". (4:58)

Allaah (swt) threatens Hell to those who do not judge with justice. Buraydah ibn al-Husayb narrated that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said,

"There are three types of judges: one will be in Paradise and the other two in Hell. The one who will be in Paradise is the one who knows the truth and judges according to it. As for the one who knows the truth but is unjust in his judgement, he will be in Hell, as will the one who judges between people without understanding or knowledge". (Abu Dawood - Jaami' al-Usool, 10/168)

(iv) Lying about [falsely attributing words to] the Messenger of Allaah (saw)

Ibn al-Ithir included in his famous book, Jaami' al-Usool a chapter in which he quoted many hadith that warn against lying about the Prophet (saw). These include the report by al-Bukhaari, Muslim and at-Tirmidhi from 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib who said: "The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said to me: ***"Do not lie about me (or falsely attribute anything to me) for whoever lies about me will enter Hell".***

al-Bukhaari reported that Salaman ibn al-Akwa' said: "I heard the Messenger of Allaah (saw) say: ***"Whoever attributes to me words that I did not say, let him take his place in Hell".***

al-Bukhaari and Abu Dawood reported that 'Abdullaah ibn az-Zubayr narrated from his father, az-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwaam: "I heard the Messenger of Allaah (saw) say: ***"Whoever lies about me deliberately, let him take his place in Hell".***

al-Bukhaari and Muslim narrated from al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah, "The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said ***"Lying about me is not like lying about anybody else. Whoever lies about me, let him take his place in Hell"***. (Jaami al-Usool, 10/211)

(v) Pride

One of the major sins, al-Kabaa'ir, is pride. Abu Hurayrah (ra) narrated: "The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said that Allaah (swt) said, ***"Pride is My cloak and greatness is My robe. Whoever competes with Me in respect of either of them, I shall admit him to Hellfire".*** (according to another report, "I will make him taste Hellfire") - Muslim.

Ibn Mas'ud said: "The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"No one who has an atom's weight of pride in his heart will enter Paradise". A man said, "But what if a man likes his clothes and shoes to look good?" He said, "Allaah is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride is rejecting the truth and looking***

down on people". (Muslim).

(vi) Killing a person for no legitimate reason

Allaah says: **"If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein [forever] and the Wrath and the Curse of Allaah are upon him, and a dreadful Penalty is prepared for him**". (4:93)

It is not permitted for a Muslim to kill another except in three cases, as explained in the hadith narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim from Ibn Mas'ud (ra) who said that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"It is not permitted to shed the blood of any Muslim person who testifies that there is no god but Allaah (swt) and that I am His Prophet, except in three cases: a soul for a soul (i.e in the case of murder), the married man who commits adultery, and the one who forsakes his religion and abandons the jamaa'ah".*** (Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 2/355)

al-Bukhaari narrates from Ibn 'Umar that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"The believer has a chance so long as he does not spill blood that it is forbidden to spill".*** Ibn Umar (ra) said, *"One of the situations from which there is no escape for the one who falls into it is the shedding of blood for no legitimate reason".* (Sahih al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ad-Daayaat, Baab Qawl Allaah ta'ala wa man yaqtul mu'minan muta'ammidan, Fath ul-Baari, 12/187)

The Prophet (saw) warned the Muslims against fighting one another and stated that the killer and his victim will both be in Hell. Abu Bakrah said: "The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"If two Muslims face one another with swords, both the slayer and the slain will be in Hell"***. I asked, or it was asked, "O Messenger of Allaah (it is clear about) the slayer, but what about the slain?" He said, ***"He was trying hard to kill his counterpart".*** (Muslim, Kitaab al-Fitan, Baab idhaa tuwajaha al-Musliman bi sayfayhimaa 4/2213)

Hence the righteous slave of Allaah (swt) refuses to fight his brother, for fear that he may be among the people of Hell, for the slayer will carry his own sins and those of his slain brother:

"Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Aadam. behold, they each presented a sacrifice [to Allaah]: it was accepted from one but not from the other. Said the latter: "Be sure I will slay you". Said the former: "Allaah does not accept the sacrifice of those who are righteous. If you do stretch your hand against me to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against you to slay you, for I fear Allaah, the Cherisher of the Worlds. For me, I intend to let you draw on yourself my sin as well as yours, for you will be among the Companions [or dwellers] of the Fire, and that is the reward of those who do wrong". (5:27-29)

(vii) Consuming Ribaa

One of the sins that will condemn a person to Hell is consuming ribaa. Allaah (swt) says of those who indulge in this sin after they have come to know that He has forbidden it:

"..but those who repeat the offence (ribaa) are Companions (dwellers) of the Fire - they will abide therein [forever]" (2:275)

"O you who believe! Devour not [interest, ribaa] doubled and multiplied, but fear Allaah that you may [really] prosper. Fear the Fire, which is prepared for those who reject Faith". (3:130-131)

According to a hadith whose authenticity is agreed upon, the Prophet (saw) counted ribaa as one of the seven sins that would doom the one who committed them to Hell. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report that Abu Hurayrah (ra) said:

"The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Avoid the seven sins that will condemn the one who commits them to Hell". They asked, "What are they, O Messenger of Allaah (saw)?" He said, "Associating anything in worship with Allaah (swt); magic and witchcraft; killing anyone whose killing Allaah (swt) has forbidden, except in the course of justice; consuming ribaa; consuming the wealth of the orphan; running away from the battlefield; and slandering the reputation of innocent, chaste believing women".***

(viii) Consuming people's wealth or property unjustly

As Allaah says: **"O you who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities; but let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual good will. Nor kill [or destroy] yourselves, for verily Allaah has been to you All-Merciful. If any do that in rancour and injustice, soon shall We cast him into the Fire, and easy is it for Allaah**" (4:29-30)

The one who consumes the wealth of people unjustly also consumes the property of orphans unjustly. Allaah (swt) made specific mention of the property of orphans because of their weak position and the ease which their property may be consumed, and the particular ugliness of this sin:

"Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a Fire into their own bellies, and they will soon be enduring a blazing Fire! (4:10)

(ix) Those Who Make Images of Animate Beings

The people who will be most severely punished on the Day of Resurrection are those who make images and seek to imitate the creation of Allaah (swt). al-Bukhaari and Muslim narrate that 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ud said, "I heard the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"The people who will be most severely punished on the Day of Resurrection are those who make images".*** (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/505)

Ibn 'Abbaas said, "I heard the Messenger of Allaah (saw) say, ***"Every maker of images will be in the Fire, and for every image he made Allaah (swt) will create for him a soul [i.e. so that the punishment will be multiplied accordingly] and Allaah (swt) will punish him in Hell."*** (al-Bukhaari and Muslim).

'Aaishah reported that the Prophet (saw) said, concerning a pillow that had pictures on it, ***"The makers of these images will be punished on the Day of Resurrection. It will be said to them: "Give life to that which you have created".*** (al-Bukhaari and Muslim).

'Aaishah also reported that the Prophet (saw) said ***"Those who will be most severely punished are those who imitate the creation of Allaah (swt)"*** (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh)

Abu Hurayrah (ra) said, ***"I heard the Messenger of Allaah says, "Allaah (swt) said, "Who is a greater wrongdoer than the one who tries to create something like My creation? Let them create a grain or let them create a seed or a grain of barely"*** (al-Bukhaari and Muslim).

(x) Inclining to Those Who Do Wrong

One of the reasons why people will enter Hell is inclining towards and supporting those who do wrong, the enemies of Allaah (swt);

"And incline not to those who do wrong, or the Fire will seize you, and you have no protectors other than Allaah, nor shall you be helped". (11:113)

(xi) Women Who Are Dressed But Appear Naked, and Those Who Whip the Backs of People

Another type of person who will enter Hell is the corrupt woman who makes a display of herself and tempts men - perhaps this phenomenon has never been quite so widespread as it is now - and never obeys Allaah (swt). Abu Hurayrah (ra) reported that the Prophet (saw) said: ***"There are two types of people of Hell that I have never seen; people with whips like the tails of cattle, with which they strike the people, and women who are dressed but appear naked, walking with an enticing gait, with their heads looking like the humps of camels, leaning to one side. They will never enter Paradise, nor even smell its fragrance, although its fragrance can be discerned from such and such a distance"***. (Muslim, al-Bayhaqi, and Ahmad - Silsilat al-Ahadith as-Saheehah, 3/316, no. 1326)

Concerning those who have whips like the tails of cattle, al-Qurtubee said, "This type of whip can be seen among us in Morocco until now." Commenting on al-Qurtubee's remark, Siddeeq Hasan Khan said, *"Indeed it can be seen in every time and place, and it is increasing day by day among the leaders. We seek refuge in Allaah (swt) from all that Allaah (swt) despises".* (Yaqadhat uli al-I'tibaar p.113)

And I say: we still see such people in many places, striking the people. May they and their like perish.

(xii) Those Who Torture Living Beings

Muslim reports in his Saheeh from Jaabir that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said,

"I was shown Hell and I saw a woman of Banu Israa'eel who was being punished because of a cat that she had owned. She tied it up and did not feed it, or let it eat of the vermin of the earth, until it died of hunger." (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/688)

If this is the case for one who tormented a cat, then how will it be for those who use all kinds of methods to torture human beings, especially when it is the righteous who are being tortured for their faith and their Islaam? May Allaah curse those who torture the believers - be it in the lands of Chechnya, Kashmir, Maluku, Philippines, Palestine, or in the jails of the Muslim lands.

(xiii) Insincerity in Seeking Knowledge

al-Haafidh al-Mundhiri mentions many hadiths that warn the person who seeks knowledge for a cause other than the sake of Allaah (swt). We will quote a few of them here. Abu Hurayrah (ra) said, the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "***Whoever seeks knowledge that should be sought only for the sake of Allaah (swt) but seeks it purely for some worldly gain, he will not smell the fragrance of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection".*** It was reported by Abu Dawud and Ibn Maajah, by Ibn Hibbaan in his Saheeh and by al-Haakim who said, "It is saheeh according to the conditions of al-Bukhaari and Muslim".

Jaabir said, The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Do not seek knowledge in order to compete with the knowledgeable, or to win arguments with the ignorant, or to show off in gatherings. Whoever does any of that will be in Hell."*** It was reported by Ibn Maajah (ra), by Ibn Hibbaan in his Saheeh and al-Bayhaqi.

Ibn 'Umar (ra) said that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Whoever seeks knowledge for a reason other than for the sake of Allaah (swt), then let him take his place in Hell." It was reported by at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah from Ibn 'Umar via Khaalid ibn Durayk who did not hear it directly from him; the men in their isnaads are thiqaah."*** (at-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb by al-Mundhiri 1/91)

(xiv) Those Who Drink From Vessels of Gold and Silver

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Umm Salamah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said ***"The one who drinks from a vessel/utensil of god and silver is pouring the fire of Hell into his stomach".*** According to a report narrated by Muslim, the wording is ***"The one who eats and drinks from vessels of gold and silver.."*** (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/462)

Hudhayfah (ra) said, I heard the Messenger of Allaah (saw) say, ***"Do not wear silk or brocade, do not drink from vessels of gold and silver, and do not eat from such platters, for these belong to them [the kuffaar] in this world, and to you in the Hereafter"*** (al-Bukhaari and Muslim).

(xv) The One Who Cuts Down Trees that Offer Shade To People

'Abdullaah ibn Hubaysh (ra) said, The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Whoever cuts down shade trees, Allaah (swt) will cast him head first into Hell".*** (Abu Dawud, Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/125. Sheikh Naasir ud-Deen al-Albaani mentioned it in Saheeh al-Jaami' 5/431, hadith no. 6352 and ascribed it to Abu Dawud an ad-Diyaa, al-Mukhtarah.)

al-Bayhaqi reported, with a saheeh isnad from 'Aaishah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Those who cut down shade trees will be thrown on their heads in Hell."*** (al-Bayhaqi in Saheeh al-Jaami' 2/88, al-Albaani said it is saheeh)

(xvi) Those Who Commit Suicide

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Whoever kills himself with iron (a sharp instrument) then his iron will be in his hand, and he will be stabbing himself in the stomach with it forever in the Fire of Hell. Whoever kills himself with poison, then he will be drinking that poison forever in the Fire of Hell. Whoever throws himself from a mountain and kills himself, he will be throwing himself down forever in the Fire of Hell".*** (at-Tawkheef min an-Naar, p. 148)

al-Bukhaari reports from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The one who strangles himself will be strangling himself in Hell, and the one who stabs himself will be stabbing himself in Hell"***. (Saheeh al-Jaami' 5/114)

The Vast Number of People in Hell

Many texts indicate the large numbers of the children of Aadam will enter Hell, and the few who will enter Paradise. Allaah (swt) says:

"Yet no faith will the greater part of mankind have, however ardently you desire it." (12:103)

An indication of the large numbers of kuffaar and mushrikeen who rejected the call of the Messengers is the fact that the Prophets will come on the Day of Resurrection some with a small group (of less than ten), others with one or two and some with no followers at all. Muslim reports from Ibn 'Abbaas that the Prophet (saw) aid:

"I was shown the nations and I saw a Prophet accompanied by a small group, another accompanied by one or tow men, and another with no companions at all.. " (Saheeh Muslim, 1/198, no.220)

Many texts indicate that nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of the children of Aadam will enter Hell, and only one (in a thousand) will enter Paradise.

al-Bukhaari narrates from Abu Sa'eed that the Prophet (saw) said: ***Allaah will say, "O Aadam!" Aadam will reply, "I respond to Your call, I am obedient to Your commands, and all good is in Your hands." Then Allaah (swt) will say to Aadam, "Send forth the people of the Fire". Aadam will say, "How many are the people of the Fire?!" Allaah (swt) will say, "Out of every thousand, take nine hundred and ninety-nine". At that time, children's hair will turn grey and every pregnant female will spontaneously abort and you will see the people looking as if they are drunk, although they are not, but Allaah's punishment will be most severe". This speech distressed his Companions and the said, "O Messenger of Allaah (saw), who amongst us will be that man (one in a thousand)?" He said, "Be of good cheer: the thousand will be from Ya'juj and Ma'juj (Gog and Magog) and the one will be from among you". Then he said, "By Him in Whose hand is my soul, I hope that you will be one third of the people of Paradise." We praised and glorified Allaah (swt) and then he said, "By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, I hope that you will be half of the people of paradise, as you are among the nations like a white hair on the hide of a black bull or a round hairless spot on the foreleg of a donkey".*** (al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Raqaaq, Baab Qawl Allaah Azza wa jalla, innaa zalzalat al-Saa'ah, Shay'un 'Adheem, Fath al-Baari, 11/388; see also Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/610, Musnad Ahmad 4/435).

It might be asked: how can we reconcile between these hadith and the report from Abu Hurayrah in Saheeh al-Bukhaari, in which the Prophet (saw) said that Allaah (swt) said to Aadam ('alayhis-salaam) - ***"Send forth [into Hell] ninety-nine out of every hundred [of your descendants]".*** It is obvious that these reports do not contradict the other Saheeh reports that we have quoted above, because these figures are referring to different groups. The hadith that mention a ratio of nine hundred and ninety-nine may be interpreted as referring to all the progeny of Aadam, whilst the hadith of al-Bukhaari that mentions a ratio of ninety-nine may be interpreted as referring to the progeny of Aadam excluding Ya'juj and Ma'juj. This reconciliation is more likely to be correct - as Ibn Hajar suggests - because Ya'juj and Ma'juj are mentioned in the hadith of Abu Sa'eed whereas they are not mentioned in the hadith of Abu Hurayrah. It may be said that the first hadith refers to all of creation, so the ratio of people admitted to Hell when all nations are taken into account is 999 in every thousand. The latter hadith of al-Bukhaari explains the ratio of people who will enter Hell from this ummah alone. Ibn Hajar (said) "This interpretation is supported by the words of the Sahabah in the hadith of Abu Hurayrah (ra): "If ninety-nine out of every hundred are taken from us, what will be left of us?" This division of people could happen twice: once involving all the nations, when one in a thousand will enter Paradise, and a second time involving this ummah alone, when ten out of every thousand will enter Paradise". (Fath al-Baari, 11/390).

The Wisdom Behind There Being So Many People In Hell

The reason why there will be so many people in Hell is not that the truth failed to reach them all, wherever or whenever they lived. Allaah does not blame anyone whom His call did not reach:

"..Nor would We punish with Our Wrath until We had sent a Messenger [to give warning]." (17:15)

"..And there never was a people, without a Warner having lived among them [in the past]". (35:24)

The reason behind it is the fact that those who responded to the Messengers were few in number, while those who disbelieved were great. Furthermore, many of those who responded were not pure and sincere in faith.

In his book, at-Takhweef min an-Naar, Ibn Rajab discussed the reason why so few people will enter Paradise and so many will enter Hell: "These hadith and other similar reports prove that most of the children of Aadam will enter Hell, and that the followers of the Messengers are few in number when compared to the rest of mankind. Those who did not follow the Messengers will enter Hell, except for those whom the Message did not reach, or who
could not understand it because of the garbled form in which they heard it. Many of those who claim to be followers of the Messengers are in fact adhering to a distorted religion and an altered book, and they too will be among the people of Hell, " as Allaah (swt) says:

"...But those of the sects that reject it [the Qur'aan] the Fire will be their promised meeting-place" (11:17)

As for those who claim to follow the Book and Law of Allaah (swt) the true religion, many of them will also enter Hell. These are the Munaafiqoon (the hypocrites) who will be in the lowest level of the Fire. Many of those who claim to follow it openly and in secret will be tested by ambiguities and doubts - these are the misguided inventors and followers of bid'ah (reprehensible innovations, heresies). Several hadith have been narrated which state that the ummah will split into seventy-odd sects, all of which will be in the Hell except for one. Many people will also be tested with forbidden desires for which the promised punishment is Hellfire, although in this case it is not necessarily an eternal punishment. No one from this ummah will be saved from the Fire, or deserve the absolute promise of Paradise, apart from the one sect or group, who follow the example and practice of the Prophet (saw) and his Companions openly and in secret, and are saved from the temptation and trials of desires and doubts. Such are very few indeed, especially in latter times". (at-Takhweef min an-Naar, Ibn Rajab, p.214)

The main reason why so many follow their desires is that the love of such things is deeply rooted in the human psyche:

"Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and children; heaved-up hoards of gold and silver [wealth]; horses branded [for blood and excellence]; and [wealth of] cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's life.." (3:14)

Many people want to fulfill these desires in whatever way they wish, without paying attention to the revealed laws of Allaah (swt), and by adhering to the customs of their forefathers in ways that contradict these laws:

"Just in the same way, whenever We sent a Warner before you [Muhammad] to any people, the wealthy ones among them said: "We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will certainly follow in their footsteps". [The Warner] said: "What! Even if I brought you better guidance than that which you found your fathers following?" They said, "For us, we deny that you [Prophets] are sent [on a mission at all]". (43:23-24)

Loving the ways of one's forefathers to the point of sanctifying them is a disease which many nations are suffering from, and its effects on the deeply-rooted desires of men are no less, if it is not counted as a desire in
itself.

at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, and an-Nasaa'ee report from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"When Allaah (swt) created Hell, He told Jibreel, "Go and look at it." Jibreel went and looked at it, and when he came back he said, "By Your Glory, I fear that no-one who hears of it will enter it". So He surrounded it with desires, and said, "Go and look at it." Jibreel went and looked at it, and when he came back, he said, "By Your Glory, I fear that there will be no-one left who does not enter it".*** (the version narrated by an-Nasaa'ee adds the words, "and at what I have prepared for its inhabitants in it".) [Jaami al-Usool, 10/250, # 8068. at-Tirmidhi described it as sahih hasan].

al-Bukhaari and Muslim narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Hell is veiled in desires and Paradise is veiled in hardships".***

Siddeeq Hasan Khan said, "*What is meant by desires is the things that people want and enjoy*". al-Qurtubee said, *"Desires are all those things that people like and towards which they are inclined, and surrounding a thing means placing something all around it, so that it cannot be reached without going through it".* (Yaqadhat uli al-I'tibar, p.220)

Most of Those Who Enter Hell Will be Women

Most of the sinners amongst the monotheists who enter Hell will be women, as is reported in as-Saheehayn, via Ibn 'Abbaas: in the khutbah given during a solar eclipse, the Prophet (saw) said, ***"I saw Hell and I saw that most of its inhabitants were women".***

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"O women give in charity, for I have seen that you form the majority of the people of Hell."*** They asked, "Why is that so, O Messenger of Allaah (saw)?" He said, ***"Because you curse too much and are ungrateful for good treatment".***

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Usaamah ibn Zayd that the Prophet (saw) said ***"I stood at the gate of Hell, and saw that most of those who entered were women".***

Muslim reports from 'Imraan ibn Husayn (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Few of the inhabitants of paradise are women".***

This does not contradict the fact that every man in Paradise will have more than one wife. What is referred to by the women who will be the majority of the inhabitants of Hell is women who are descendants of Aadam: the inhabitants of Paradise will have many wives from among al-Hoor al-'Iyn.

"Women will be few among the inhabitants of Paradise because in most cases they prefer the immediate pleasures of this life, as they are less wise and unable to keep the Hereafter in mind. They are too weak to strive and prepare themselves for it, and are more inclined towards this world. In spite of all this, they are the strongest factor in this world that distracts men from the Hereafter, because men are inclined to desire them and they are not concerned with the Hereafter. They are quick to follow those who call them to deviate from Islaam, and reluctant to follow those pious people who call them to the Hereafter, and righteous deeds". (al-Qurtubee, at-Tadhkirah, 1/369)

In spite of all this, there are many righteous women among them, who stay within the limits set by Allaah (swt), adhere to His laws, and obey Allaah (swt) and His Messenger. Many of these women will enter Paradise, and many of them excel over men in their faith and righteous deeds.

The Huge Size of the People of Hell

When the People of Hell enter the Fire they will be huge in size, in a form that none can comprehend, except the One Who Created them.

According to a hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah, the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"The distance between the shoulders of the Kaafir in Hell will be like three day's travelling for a fast rider"*** (Muslim, 4/290)

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"The molar of the kaafir or the eye-tooth of the kaafir, will be like Uhud, and the thickness of his skin will be like a journey of three (days)"***. (Muslim, 4/2189, at-Tirmidhi, al-Haakim, Ibn Maajah and Ahmad)

Zayd ibn Arqam said, *"The man who is destined for Hell will become huge in preparation for it, so that one of his molars will be as big as Mount Uhud".*

This is narrated by Ahmad, who attributes it to the Prophet (saw) but Zayd did not state that he heard it from the Prophet (saw). (Silsilat al-Ahadith as-Sahihah, 4/131, al-Albaani said its isnaad is saheeh according to Ibn Maajah and Ahmad)

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (saw) said: ***"The kaafir's skin will be forty-two cubits thick and his molar will be like Uhud and the space he occupies will be as wide as the distance between Makkah and Madinah."*** (at-Tirmidhi) (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh 3/103, sahih hasan)

Abu Hurayrah (ra) reported that the Prophet (saw) said: ***"The molar of the kaafir on the Day of Resurrection will be like Uhud, and the thickness of his skin will be seventy cubits. His upper arm will be like al-Bayda', his thigh will be like Warqaan and the space he occupies will be like the distance between me and ar-Rabdhah***" (al-Haakim and Ahmad - Silsilah al-Ahadith as-Sahihah, 4/94. al-Baydaa` could be the name of a mountain or it may refer to the well-known city in Morocco)

This increasing of the kaafir's body size will increase his suffering and torment. Commenting on the hadith narrated by Muslim on this subject, an-Nawawi said, *"All of this is in order to intensify the suffering, and all of this is possible for Allaah (swt). We must believe in it, because the truthful (Prophet) has told us about it*" [Sharh an-Nawawi 'alaa Muslim, 17/186]. Ibn Katheer in a comment on these hadith said, "So that their punishment and suffering may be more severe, as Allaah (swt) the Severe in punishment says:

"...that they may taste the Penalty". (4:46)

[Ibn Katheer, an-Nihayah, 2/139]

The Food, Drink and Clothing of the People of Hell

The food of the people of Hell is ad-Daree and az-Zaqqum, and their drink is al-Hameem, al-Ghasleen and al-Ghassaaq.

Allaah (swt) says:

"No food will there be for them but a bitter Daree obnoxious thorny plant, which will neither nourish nor satisfy hunger". (88:6-7)

ad-Daree is a thorny plant know as ash-Shubruq that grows in the Hijaaz. Ibn 'Abbaas said, "It is a low-growing thorny plant; when it grows tall it is called daree". Qataadah said, *"It is one of the very worst types of food"* (Ibn Rajab, at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.115). This food of the people of Hell will be of no benefit whatsoever to them, and they will not enjoy it in the least; this is one of the forms of punishment that they will suffer. Allaah (swt) says:

"Verily the tree of Zaqqum will be the food of the sinful, like molten brass, it will boil in their insides, like the boiling of scalding water." (44:43-46).

The Tree of Zaqqum is described in another aayah:

"Is that [Paradise] the better entertainment or the tree of Zaqqum [a horrible tree in Hell]? For We have truly made it [as] a trial for the wrongdoers. For it is a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hellfire, The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils; Truly they will eat thereof and fill their bellies therewith. Then on top of that they will be given to drink a mixture made of boiling water. Then, shall their return by to the blazing Fire of Hell". (37:62-68)

Elsewhere in the Qur'aan, Allaah (swt) says:

"Then, will you truly - O you that go wrong, and treat [Truth] as Falsehood]! You will surely taste of the tree of Zaqqum. Then you will fill your insides therewith, and drinkboiling water on top of it. Indeed you will drink like diseased camels raging with thirst! Such will be their entertainment on the Day of Requital!" (56:51-66)

What we may understand from these aayaat is that this tree is a repulsive tree, whose roots go deep into the bottom of Hell, and whose branches stretch forth all over. Its fruits are so ugly that they are likened to the heads of devils, so that everyone may easily understand just how ugly they are, even though they have never seen them. Although this tree is so vile and obnoxious, the people of Hell will become so hungry that they will have no choice but to eat from it until they are full. When they have filled their bellies, this food will start to churn like boiling oil, which will cause a great deal of suffering to them. At that point they will rush to drink al-Hameem, which is an extremely hot water, and they will drink it like camels that drink and drink but their thirst is never quenched because of some disease. Then it will tear their innards:

"..[they] will be given to drink, boiling water, so that it cuts up their bowels [to pieces]" (47:15)

This is the hospitality that will be offered to them on that awesome Day. May Allaah (swt) protect us from this by His Grace and Mercy.

When the people of Hell eat this vile food of ad-Daree and az-Zaqqum, they will choke because of its foulness:

"Verily with Us are fetters [to bind them] and a raging Fire [to burn them], And a food that chokes and a Penalty grievous". (73:12-13)

The food that makes people choke is the food that sticks in the throat.

The Prophet (saw) portrayed for us the ugly and terrifying nature of az-Zaqqum:

"If one drop from az-Zaqqum were to land on this world, the people of earth and all their means of sustenance would be destroyed. So how must it be for the one who must eat it?" It was reported by at-Tirmidhi, who said, it is a sahih hasan hadith. [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/105, narrated by Ibn 'Abbaas]

Another kind of food that will be eaten by the people of Hell is al-Ghasleen. Allaah (swt) says:

"So no friend has he here this Day, Nor has he any food except corruption [or filth] from the washing of wounds [al-Ghasleen], which none do eat but those in sin". (69:35-37)

"Yea, such! - Then shall they taste it - a boiling fluid and a fluid dark, murky, intensely cold [ghassaaq]! And other penalties of a similar kind - to match them!" (38:57-58)

al-Ghasleen and al-Ghassaaq mean the same thing, which is the festering pus that oozes out of the skin of the people of Hell. It was suggested that it refers to the offensive discharge that flows from the private parts of adulterous women, and the decaying skin and flesh of the kuffaar. al-Qurtubee said, *"It is the juice of the people of Hell"* [Yaqhadhat uli al-I'tibaar, p. 86]

Allaah tells us that al-Ghasleen is just one of many similarly obnoxious punishments.

The drink of the people of Hell will be al-Hameem. Allaah (swt) says:

"...and if they implore relief, they will be granted water like melted brass that will scald their faces. How dreadful the drink! How uncomfortable a couch to recline on!" (18:29)

"...and he will be made to drink boiling, festering water. He will sip it unwillingly, and he will find great difficulty in swallowing it.." (14:16-17)

These aayaat mention four kinds of drink that the people of Hell have to endure:

(1) al-Hameem: an extremely hot water.

As Allaah says: **"In its midst and in the midst of the boiling hot water will they wander round!"** (55:44)

This was explained as being ultra-hot water. And Allaah (swt) says: **"They will be given to drink from a boiling hot spring."** (88:5)

(2) al-Ghassaaq: as discussed above.

(3) al-Sadeed (pus): what flows from the flesh and skin of the Kaafir. Muslim reports from Jaabir that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Anyone who drinks intoxicants will be made to drink the mud of khabaal".*** They asked, "O Messenger of Allaah, what is the mud of khabaal?" He said, ***"The sweat of the people of Hell"***, or "***the juice of the people of Hell".***

(4) al-Muhl: according to the hadith of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri narrated by Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi the Prophet (saw) said:

"It is like boiling oil, and when it is brought near a person's face, the skin of the face falls off into it". Ibn 'Abbaas said, "*It is like very thick oil".*

Some of the sinners will be fed the burning coals of Hell as an appropriate punishment:

"Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat us a Fire into their own bellies, and they will soon be enduring a blazing Fire!" (4:10)

"Those who conceal Allaah's revelations in the Book, and purchase for them a miserable profit - swallow into themselves naught but Fire.." (2:174)

As for the dress of the people of Hell, Allaah (swt) has told us that garments of fire will be tailor-made for them, as it says in the Qur'aan:

"..But for those who deny [their Rabb] for them will be cut out a garment of Fire; over their heads will be poured out boiling water" (22:19)

When Ibraaheem at-Taymi recited this Aayah he used to say, *"Glory be to Allaah, Who has created garments out of fire"* (at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.126)

Allaah (swt) says, **"And you will see the sinners that Day bound together in fetters. Their garments of liquid pitch and their faces covered with Fire**". (14:49-50)

This pitch or tar is melted copper. According to a hadith narrated by Muslim from Abu Maalik al-Ash'ari, the Prophet (saw) said, "***The woman who wails for the dead, if she does not repent before she dies, she will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection, wearing a shirt of tar and a shield of scabs."*** Ibn Maajah reported this with the wording, ***"The woman who wails over the dead, who does not repent before she dies, Allaah (swt) will cut out for her a garment of tar and a shield of scabs".***

The Punishment of the People of Hell: The Intensity of the Suffering of the People of Hell

The Fire is an intense punishment, in which there are different types of torment, to escape which people would give the dearest possessions that they own:

"As for those who reject Faith, and die rejecting - never would be accepted from any such as much gold as the earth contains, though they should offer it for ransom. For such is [in store] a penalty grievous and they will find no helpers". (3:91)

"As to those who reject faith - if they had everything on earth and twice repeated, to give as ransom for the Penalty of the Day of Judgement, it would never be accepted of them. Theirs would be a grievous Penalty." (5:36)

Muslim reports from Anas ibn Maalik that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: "***One of the people of Hell who found the most pleasure in the life of this world will be brought forth on the Day of Resurrection, and will be dipped into the Fire of Hell. Then he will be asked: O son of Aadam, have you ever seen anything good? Have you ever enjoyed any pleasure?" He will say, "No, by Allaah (swt), O Rabb""*** (Muslim, Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/102).

Just a few short moments will make the kuffaar forget all the good times and pleasure that they had enjoyed. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Anas ibn Maalik that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"On the Day of Resurrection, Allaah will say to one whose punishment in the Fire is the lightest, "If you had whatever you wanted on earth, would you give it up to save yourself?" He will say, "Yes". Allaah (swt) will say, "I wanted less than that from you: when you were still in the loins of Aadam, I asked you not to associate anything in worship with Me, but you insisted on associating others in worship with Me"".*** (al-Bukhaari, in Kitaab ar-Raqaaq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 11/416, See also Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/102)

The horror and intensity of the Fire will make a man lose his mind, and he would give up everything he holds dear to escape it, but he will never be able to:

"..the sinner's desire will be: would that he could redeem himself from the Penalty of that Day by [sacrificing] his children, his wife and his brother, his kindred who sheltered him, and all, all that is on earth, so that it could deliver him. By no means! For it would be the Fire of Hell! Plucking out [his being] right to the skull". (70:11-16)

This horrendous ongoing punishment will make the life of these evildoers one of continual sorrow and pain.

Pictures of Their Punishments

(1) The Punishment of the People of Hell Will Vary in Degree

As Hell has various levels, in some of which the torment and horror is greater than in others, so the people of Hell will be given different levels of punishment. According to a hadith narrated by Muslim and Ahmad from Samurah, the Prophet (saw) said, concerning the people of Hell:"***There are some whom the Fire will take up to their ankles, others up to their knees, others up to their waists, and others up to their collarbones".*** According to another report, "up to their necks" (Muslim in Kitaab al-Jannah wa Sifaat Na'imihaa, Baab Shiddat Harr an-Naar, 4/2185)

The Messenger of Allaah (saw) has told us about those who will receive the lightest punishment in Hell. al-Bukhaari reports from al-Nu'maan ibn Basheer who said:

"I heard the Messenger of Allaah (saw) say, ***"The person who will have the least punishment among the people of Hell on the Day of Resurrection will be a man under the arch of whose feet will be placed a smouldering ember, and his brains will boil because of it."***

In another report also narrated by al-Bukhaari from an-Nu'maan ibn Basheer, the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The person who will have the least punishment among the people of Hell on the Day of Resurrection will be a man under the arch of whose feet will be placed two smouldering embers, because of which his brains will boil like water boils in a mirjal [copper vessel] or qumqum [narrow-necked vessel].***" (al-Bukhaari in Sahih, Kitaab ar-Raqaaq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 11/417, and Muslim in his Sahih, Kitaab al-Imaan, 1/196, no. 363)

According to a report narrated from an-Nu'man ibn Basheer by Muslim, the Prophet (Saw) said: ***The person who will have the least punishment among the people of Hell on the Day of Resurrection is a man who will be given shoes and laces of fire, because of which his brains will boil like water in a mirjal (copper vessel). He will not think that anyone could be more severely punished than himself, yet he will be the one with the lightest punishment".*** (Sahih Muslim, Kitaab al-Imaan, 1/196, no. 364; Muslim also reports from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri in the same chapter, no. 361)

al-Bukhaari and Muslim both narrate from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri that he heard the Messenger of Allaah (saw) say, when his uncle Abu Taalib was mentioned: ***"Maybe my intercession will help him on the Day of Resurrection, so that he may be put in a shallow part of Hell, with fire reaching to his ankles and causing his brain to boil".*** (al-Bukhaari in Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 11/417 and Muslim in Kitaab al-Imaam, Baab Shifa'at an-Nabi (saw), 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib, 1/195, hadith no. 360)

Many aayaat confirm the different levels of punishment that will be given to the people of Hell:

"The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire.." (4:145)

"..and [the Sentence will be] on the Day that Judgement will be established [it will be said to the angels]: "Cast the people of Pharaoh into the severest Penalty!" (40:46)

"Those who reject Allaah and hinder [men] from the Path of Allaah, for them will We add penalty to penalty, for that they used to spread mischief [or corruption]". (16:88)

al-Qurtubi said, *"This topic indicates that the kufr of the person who simply disbelieves is not like the kufr of a person who oppresses, disbelieves, rebels and disobeys. There is no doubt that the kuffaar will suffer different levels of punishment in hell, as is known from Qur'aan and Sunnah. We know for certain that the punishment of those who oppressed and killed the Prophets and Muslims, and spread corruption and disbelief on earth, will not be the same as the punishment of those who simply disbelieved, but treated the Prophets and Muslims well. Do you not see Abu Taalib, how the Prophet (Saw) will bring him up to a shallow level of Hell, because he helped him, protected him and treated him well? The hadith narrated by Muslim from Samurah may be interpreted as referring to the kuffaar, as there is a hadith about Abu Taalib, or it may be interpreted as referring to those monotheists who will be punished".* (at-Tadhkirah, p. 409)

Ibn Rajab said, *"Know that the different levels of punishment suffered by the people of Hell will be according to the levels of their deeds for which they entered Hell". Then he quotes the evidence for that, such as the words of Ibn 'Abbaas, "The punishment of those who were extreme in their disbelief and spread corruption on earth, calling others to kufr, will not be like the punishment of those who did not do such things". Then Ibn Rajab says, "Similarly, the punishments of the monotheists in Hell will be at different levels, according to their deeds. The punishment of those who were guilty of major sins (kabaa'ir) will not be like that of those who were guilty of minor sins (saghaa'ir). The punishment may be reduced for some of them because of other good deeds, or for whatever reason Allaah (swt) wills. Hence some of them may die in the Fire"*. (at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p. 142-143)

(2) Roasting of the Skin

The Fire of the Almighty will burn the skin of the kuffaar. The skin is the site of sensation, where the pain of burning is felt, and for this reason, Allaah (swt) will replace the burnt skin with a new one, to be burnt anew, and this will be repeated endlessly:

"Those who reject Our Signs, We shall soon cast them into the Fire. As often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty. For Allaah is Exalted in Power, All-Wise" (4:56)

(3) Melting

One of the kinds of torment will be the pouring of al-Hameem over their heads. al-Hameem is ultra-heated water; because of its extreme heat, it will melt their innards and everything inside:

"... then as for those who disbelieve, garments of fire will be cut out for them, boiling water will

be poured down over their heads. With it will melt or vanish away what is within their bellies, as well as [their] skins". (22:19-20)

at-Tirmidhi reported from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said:

"*al-Hameem will be poured on their heads and will dissolve through until it reaches their sides and all their innards will drop out, until it comes out of his feet, and everything is melted, then he will be restored as he was.*" He (at-Tirmidhi) said, "It is a sahih ghareeb hasan hadith". (at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.145, Jaami' al-Usool, 10/540)

(4) Scorching (the face).

The noblest and most dignified part of a person is the face, hence the Prophet (saw) forbade us to strike the face. One of the ways in which Allaah (swt) will humiliate the people of Hell is by gathering them on their faces, blind, deaf and dumb, on the Day of Resurrection:

"..We shall gather them together prone on their faces, blind, dumb, and deaf; their abode will be Hell; everytime it shows abatement, We shall increase for them the Fierceness of the Fire". (17:97)

Then they will be thrown on their faces in the Fire:

"And if any do evil, their faces will be thrown headlong into the Fire; "Do you receive a reward other than that which you have earned by your deeds?" (27:90)

The Fire will burn and cover their faces forever, with no barrier between them and it:

"If only the unbelievers knew [the time] when they will not be able to ward off the Fire from their faces, nor yet from their backs, and [when] no help can reach them!" (21:39)

"The Fire will burn their faces and they will therein grin, with their lips displaced" (23:104)

"Their garments of liquid pitch, and their faces covered with fire". (14:50)

"Is then one who has to fear the brunt of the penalty on the Day of Judgement [and receive it on] his face, [like one guarded therefrom]?" (39:24)

Look at this horrific scene that makes one shudder!

"The Day that their faces will be turned upside down in the Fire, they will say, "Woe to us! Would that we had obeyed Allaah and obeyed the Messenger." (33:66)

Do you not see that just as meat and fish are turned over when they are cooked, so their faces will be turned over in the Fire of Hell. We seek refuge with Allaah (swt) from the punishment of the people of Hell.

(5) Dragging

Another of the painful torments that the Kuffaar will suffer is being dragged on their faces into Hell:

"Truly those in sin are the ones straying in mind, and mad. The Day they will be dragged through the Fire on their faces [they will hear]: "Taste the touch of Hell." (54:47-48)

Their pain at being dragged will be increased by the fact that they will be tied up in chains and fetters:

"...But soon shall they know - when the yokes [shall be] round their necks, and the chains, they shall be dragged along, in the boiling fetid fluid, then shall they be burned". (40:70-72)

Qataadah said, *"They will be dragged once in the Fire, and once in al-Hameem."* (Ibn Rajab, at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.147)

(6) Blackening of the faces.

Allaah (swt) will blacken the faces of the people of Hell in the Hereafter:

"On the Day when some faces will be [lit up with] white and some faces will be [in the gloom of] black; to those who faces will be black [it will be said]: "Did you reject Faith after accepting it? Taste then the Penalty for rejecting Faith". (3:106)

This is intense blackness, as if the darkness of night had covered their faces

"But those who have earned evil will have a reward of like evil, and ignominy will cover their faces. No defender will they have from [the wrath of] Allaah. Their faces will be covered, as it were, with pieces from the darkness of night. They are Companions [or dwellers] of the Fire, they will abide therein [for aye!] (10:27)

(7) The Fire Will Surround the Kuffaar

The people of Hell are the Kuffaar whose sins and disobedience surround them, leaving no hasanah for them. Allaah (swt) said, in response to the Jews who claimed that the Fire would only touch them for a certain length of time:

"Nay, those who seek gain in evil and are girt round by their sins - they are companions [or dwellers] of the Fire; therein shall they abide [forever]" (2:81)

No one will be in such a state unless he is a kaafir and a mushrik. Siddeeq Hasan Khan says, "What is referred to here by evil deeds is a certain type of deed, the reasons for which should be overwhelming, with no way out or means of achieving hasanah. Eternity in Hell is for the kuffaar and mushrikeen, so evil and sin in this aayah has to be interpreted as meaning kufr and shirk. Thus the arguments of the Mu'tazilah and Khawaarij are shown to be false by the proven mutawaatir reports that state that the sinners among the monotheists will eventually be brought forth from Hell."

Sins and evil deeds surround the Kuffaar like a bracelet around the wrist, so their punishment should fit their crimes. Hence the Fire will surround the Kuffaar on all sides, as Allaah (swt) says:

"**There will be a bed of Hell [Fire] and over them coverings [of Hellfire]**" (7:41)

The "bed" is what comes under them, and the "coverings" are what come over them. What is meant is that fires will surround them from above and below, as Allaah (swt) says:

"On the Day when the torment [Hellfire] shall cover them from above them and from underneath their feet" (29:55)

"**They shall have coverings of Fire above them, and coverings of Fire beneath them"**. (39:16)

Some of the Salaf interpreted the "Bed" (al-Mihaad) as meaning a mattress and the "cover" (al-Ghawaash) as being a blanket (Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 3/168)

The "surrounding" may be interpreted in another way, which is that Hell will have a wall to surround the kuffaar so that they will never be able to get out or escape form it, as Allaah (swt) says:

"..Verily We have prepared for the wrongdoers a Fire whose [smoke and flames] like the walls and roof of a tent, will hem them in; If they implore relief, they will be granted water like melted brass, that will scald their faces. How dreadful the drink! How uncomfortable a couch to recline on!" (18:29)

(8) The Fire Will Leap Up Over Their Hearts

We have already explained that the physical bodies of the people of Hell will be made huge in size. In spite of that, the Fire will penetrate their bodies until it reaches their innermost depths:

"Soon will I cast him into Hellfire! And what will explain to you what Hellfire is? Naught does it permit to endure, and naught does it leave alone, Darkening and changing the colour of man!" (74:26-29)

Some of the Salaf said concerning the phrase, "naught does it leave alone" that it meant, "*it eats bones and flesh and brains and does not leave anything untouched"* (Ibn Rajab, at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.146)

Allaah (swt) says: **"By no means! He will be sure to be thrown into that which Breaks to Pieces. And what will explain to you what that which Breaks to Pieces is? [It is] the Fire of the [wrath of] Allaah, kindled [to a blaze], that which mourns [right] to the hearts"**. (104:4-6)

Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurtubee said, *"The Fire eats into him until it reaches his heart, then his body will be created anew. It was reported that when Thaabit al-Bananee read this aayah, he said, "The Fire will burn them until it reaches their hearts, while they are still alive; this is how great their suffering is!" Then he wept."* (at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.146)

(9) Their entrails will be spilled out in the Fire

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Usaamah ibn Zayd that the Prophet (saw) said: ***"A man will be brought forth on the Day of Resurrection and thrown into the Fire. Then his entrails will be spilled out into the Fire, and he will be forced to walk around and around like a donkey in a treadmill. The people of Hell will gather around him and say, "O So-and-so, what is wrong with you? Did you not enjoin us to do good and forbid us to do evil?" He will say, "I used to order you to do good, but I did not do it, and I used to forbid you to do evil, but I used to do it." Then he will walk around and around like a donkey in a treadmill"*** (al-Bukhaari and Muslim, Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/642, hadith no. 5139)

One of the people whose entrails will be spilled out in Hell is 'Amr ibn Lahay who was the first to change the religion of the Arabs. The Prophet (saw) saw him dragging his own entrails in Hell. Muslim reports from Jaabir

ibn Abdullaah that the Prophet (saw) said, "***I saw 'Amr ibn 'Aamir al-Khuza'ee dragging his own entrails in Hell, and he was the first one to introduce as-Saa'ibah (a she-camel turned loose for free pasture for the sake of idols, upon which nothing was allowed to be carried"***. (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/642)

(10) The Chains, Fetters and Hammers of the People of Hell

Allaah (swt) has promised that the people of Hell will have chains fetters and hammers in the Fire:

"For the Rejecters We have prepared iron chains, yokes and a blazing Fire". (76:4)

"With Us are fetters [to bind them] and a Fire [to burn them] and a food that chokes, and a penalty grievous". (73:12-13)

The yokes will be placed around their necks:

"...We shall put yokes on the necks of the unbelievers. It would only be a requital for their ill [or evil] deeds". (34:33)

"When yokes [shall be] round their necks, and the chains, they shall be dragged along." (40:71)

The chains or fetters are something with which Allah (swt) will punish them:

"With Us are fetters..." (73:12)

The chains are another kind of punishment, with which the wrongdoers will be tied up, just as criminals are chained up in this world. See how the Qur'aan describes them:

"The stern command will say, "Seize him and bind him, and burn him in the blazing Fire, further, make him march in a chain, whereof the length is seventy cubits". (69:30-32)

Allaah (swt) has promised the people of Hell hooked rods of iron which are like hammers with which the evildoers will be beaten when they try to escape from the Fire, and they will be thrown ever deeper into Hell:

"And for them are hooked rods of iron [to punish them]. Every time they seek to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be driven back therein, and [it will be] said to them: "taste the torment of burning!" (22:21-22)

(11) They will be accompanied by their objects of worship and their devils in Hell

The Kuffaar and Mushrikeen used to glorify the false deities that they worshipped instead of Allaah (swt); they would defend them and give of themselves and their wealth in their worshipping. On the Day of Resurrection, Allaah (swt) will cause those deities that they used to worship instead of Him to enter the Fire, as a source of humiliation and shame for them, so that they will know that they were misled and that they worshipped something that has no power either to benefit them or to harm them:

"Verily, you [disbelievers] and the [false] gods that you worship besides Allaah are [but] fuel for Hell! To it will you [surely] come! If these had been gods, they would not have got there! But each one will abide therein." (21:98-99)

Ibn Rajab says, *"Because the Kuffaar worship their gods instead of Allaah (swt) and believe that they will intercede for them with Allaah (swt) and will bring them closer to Him, they will be punished by having these gods in Hell with them as a source of humiliation and shame, and to make them feel deep sorrow and regret. Because when a punishment is accompanied by the thing that was the reason for the punishment, the pain and sorrow becomes more intense.*" (at-Takhweef min an-Naar, p.105)

For this reason the sun and moon will be thrown into Hell, and will be fuel for it, to punish those wrongdoers who used to worship them instead of Allaah. As the hadith says, "***The sun and moon will be rolled up in Hell"***. (al-Bayhaqi in Shu'ab al-Imaan, and al-Bazzar, al-Isma'eelee and al-Khattabee, see Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 1/32)

al-Qurtubee says, "*They will be placed in Hell, because they were worshipped instead of Allaah (swt). It is not a punishment for them, because they are inanimate, but that will be done in order to increase the sorrow and shame of the Kaafireen. This is what was said by some of the scholars."* (al-Qurtubee, at-Tadhkirah, p.392)

For the same reason, the Kuffaar and their devils will be gathered together, so as to make the punishment more intense:

"And if anyone withdraws himself from the remembrance of [Allaah] All-Gracious, We appoint for him an evil one to be an intimate companion to him. Such evil ones really hinder them from the Path, but they think that they are being guided aright! At length, when [such a one] comes to Us, he says, [to his evil companion], "Would that between me and you were the distance of east and west". Ah, evil is the companion indeed! When you have done wrong, it will avail you nothing, that Day that you shall be partners in punishment". (43:36-39)

(12) Their sorrow, regret and supplications

When the Kuffaar see Hell, they will be filled with intense regret, at a time when regret will be of no avail:

"...they would declare [their] repentance when they see the penalty but the judgement between them will be with justice, and no wrong will be done unto them." (10:54)

When the Kuffaar looks at the record of his deeds, and sees his kufr and shirk, for which he deserves eternal Hell, he will pray for oblivion and death:

"But he who is given his Record behind his back, soon will he cry for perdition, and he will enter a blazing Fire". (84:10-12)

They will repeat their prayer for oblivion when they are thrown into the Fire and its heat touches them:

"**And when they are cast, bound together, into a constricted place therein, they will plead for destruction there and then! This Day plead not for a single destruction: plead for destruction oft-repeated"**. (25:13-14)

Their screams will grow louder and more desperate and they will call on their Rabb, hoping that He (swt) will take them out of the Fire:

"Therein will they cry aloud [for assistance]: "Our Rabb! Bring us out, we shall work righteousness, not the [deeds] we used to do." (35:37)

At that time, they will come to realise the error and foolishness of their kufr:

"They will further say: "Had we but listened or used our intelligence we would not [now] be among the companions of the blazing Fire". (67:10)

"**They will say, "Our Rabb! Twice have You made us without life and twice have you given us life! Now we have recognised our sins: Is there any way out [of this]?"** (40:11)

But their prayer will be harshly refused, and they will be answered as animals deserve to be answered:

"They will say, "Our Rabb! Our misfortune overwhelmed us, and we became a people astray. Our Rabb! Bring us out of this; if ever we return [to evil] then shall we be wrongdoers indeed!" He [Allaah] will say, "Be driven into it with ignominy! And speak not to Me!" (23:106-108)

The promise will come true, and they will reach a destination where no prayer will benefit them and there will be no hope:

"If only you could see when the guilty ones will bend low their heads before their Rabb [saying], "Our Rabb! We have seen and we have heard; now then send us back [to the world], we will work righteousness for we do indeed [now] believe". If We had so willed, surely We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance, but the Word from Me will come true: I will fill Hell with jinns and men all together. Taste you then - for you forgot the Meeting of this Day of yours, and We too will forget you - taste the penalty of eternity for your [evil] deeds!" (32:12-14)

After that the people of Hell will call upon the keepers of Hell: "Pray to your Rabb to lighten us the penalty for a day [at least]! They will say, "Did there not come to you your Messengers with clear signs?" They will say, "Yes". They will reply, "Then pray [as you like]! But the prayer of those without faith is nothing but [futile wandering] in [mazes of] error". (40:49-50)

Then they will ask for intercession so that their Rabb might annihilate them:

"And they will cry, "O Malik [Guard of Hell]! Would that your Rabb put an end to us". He will say, "Nay, but you shall abide"" (43:77)

Everything they ask for will be refused. There will be no coming out of the Fire, no reduction in the torment, and no oblivion. Rather it is ongoing, eternal punishment, and at that time they will be told:

"...and whether you are patient of it, or impatient of it, it is all the same. You are only being requited for what you used to do." (52:16)

Then their wailing will increase, and they will weep for a long time:

"Let them laugh a little: much will they weep: a recompense for the [evil] that they do". (9:82)

They will weep until no tears are left, then they will weep blood, and their tears will leave traces on their faces like the channels cut into rock by water. In al-Mustadrak by al-Haakim there is a report from 'Abdullaah ibn Qays that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"The people of Hell will weep so much that if ships were placed in their tears, they would float, and they will weep blood - meaning, instead of tears"***

Anas ibn Maalik reported that the Prophet (saw) said: ***"The people of Hell will be made to weep, and they will weep until they have no tears left. Then they will weep blood until they have as it were channels in their faces, if ships were put in them, they would float".*** (1)

Those evildoers lost their own souls and their families when they preferred kufr to eemaan. Listen to the wailing and cries when they are punished:

"The Day when their faces will be turned upside down in the Fire, they will say, "Woe to us! Would that we had obeyed Allaah and obeyed the Messenger!" And they would say, "Our Rabb, verily we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones, and they misled us from the (right) Path. Our Rabb, give them double penalty and curse them with a very great curse!" (33:66-68)

Listen to how Allaah (swt) described their condition [we seek refuge with Allaah (swt) from that]:

"As for those who are wretched, they will be in the fire, sighing in a high and low tone. They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and earth endure, except as your Rabb wills.." (11:106-107)

az-Zajjaj said, "*The high tone (az-Zafeer) is because of the intensity of their groaning and it is very high. It was suggested that az-Zafeer means the panting of the breath in the chest due to extreme fear, so that the ribs become swollen. The "low tone" (ash-Shaheeq) is a long drawn-out breath, or an intake of breath; in either case it is an indication of the great extent of their grief and anguish. Their situation is likened to that of the one whose heart was overwhelmed by heat and whose soul was surrounded by it. al-Layth said, "az-Zafeer means that a man will take deep breaths because of his intense grief, and ash-Shaheeq refers to his exhaling"* (Siddeeq Hasan Khan, Yaqadhat uli al-I'tibaar p.72)

Footnotes

(1) Sheikh Naasir ud-Deen al-Albaani narrated these two hadiths in Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 4/245, no. 1679 and attributed the first hadith to al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak. al-Haakim said "It is a hadith whose isnaad is saheeh". adh-Dhahabi agreed with him. Sheikh Naasir said, "He should have added: according to the conditions of al-Bukhaari and Muslim. All the men of its isnaad are men who narrated the hadith they (al-Bukhaari and Muslim) recorded. He mentioned that one of them, Abul-Nu'man, whose nickname was 'Aarim had become confused. Sheikh Naasir quoted the second hadith in support of the first, and attributed it to Ibn Maajah, and Ibn Abi-Dunyaa; Yazeed al-Raqqas one of the narrators, is da'eef, but the rest of the narrators are those from whom al-Bukhaari and Muslim narrated.

How to Save Oneself From the Fire

As it is kufr that will condemn a person to eternal Hell, the way to be saved from Hell is through eemaan and righteous deeds. So the Muslims pray to their Rabb with faith to save them from the Fire:

"Those who say, "Our Rabb! We have indeed believed, forgive us then, our sins and save us from the agony of the Fire". (3:16)

"...Our Rabb! Not for naught have You created [all] this, glory to You! Give us salvation from the torment of the Fire. Our Rabb! Any whom You admit to the Fire, truly You cover with shame, and never will wrongdoers find any helpers. Our Rabb! We have heard the call of one calling [us] to faith: "Believe in your Rabb," and we have believed. Our Rabb! Forgive us our sins and blot out from us our inequities, and take to Yourself our souls in the company of the righteous [al-Abraar]. Our Rabb! Grant us what You did promise unto us through Your Messengers and save us from shame on the Day of Judgement, for You never break Your Promise". (3:191-194)

Many ahadith speak in detail about this matter and describe the deeds that will protect one from the Fire, for example, love of Allaah (swt). In al-Haakim's al-Mustadrak, and Ahmad's al-Musnad, a report from Anas ibn Maalik (ra) states, "The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "***By Allaah (swt), Allaah will never thrown one whom He loves into the Fire"*** (sahih, See Sahih al-Jaami' 6/104)

Fasting is also a source of protection from the Fire, as Ahmad reports in al-Musnad and al-Bayhaqi in Shu'ab al-Imaan, with a hasan isnaad from Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah: "The Prophet (saw) said, "Allaah (swt) says, ***"Fasting is a shield with which one may protect oneself from the Fire***". (Sahih al-Jaami, 4/114)

In Shu'ab al-Imaan, al-Bayhaqi reports from 'Uthmaan ibn Abil-Aas that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Fasting is a shield from the punishment of Allaah (swt)"*** It was reported by Ahmad, an-Nasaa'ee, Ibn Maajah and Ibn Khuzaymah and its isnaad is saheeh (Sahih al-Jaami' 3/264).

If fasting is accomplished at the time of jihaad against the enemy, then that is a great victory, as it was reported from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudree that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"Whoever fasts for one day when he is engaged in jihaad for the sake of Allaah, Allaah will remove him [lit. his face] seventy years distance from the Fire***". (Ahmad, al-Bukhaari, Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasaa'ee - Sahih al-Jaami' 5/310)

Other means of salvation from the Fire are fear of Allaah and jihaad for His sake:

"But for him who fears the standing before his Rabb, there will be two gardens [ie in Paradise]" (55:46)

at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasaa'ee reported from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah(saw) said: ***"No one who weeps out of fear of Allaah will enter Hell until the milk goes back into the breast [i.e. never] and a man will never have both the dust from fighting in the way of Allaah (swt) and the smoke of Hell".*** (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/356, no. 3828, isnaad is sahih)

al-Bukhaari reports from Abu 'Abs that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"No two feet that get dusty for the sake of Allaah (swt) will never meet in the Fire of Hell".*** (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/349, no. 3794)

Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"A Kaafir and the one who kills him will never meet in the Fire of Hell."*** (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/349, no. 3795)

We may also be shielded from the Fire by seeking protection with Allaah from it:

"Those who say, "our Rabb! Avert from us the wrath of Hell, for its wrath is indeed an affliction grievous." Evil indeed is it as an abode and as a place to rest in". (25:64-65)

Ahmad, Ibn Maajah, Ibn Hibbaan, and al-Haakim report with a sahih isnaad from Anas, that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"No one asks Allaah (swt)) for Paradise three times, but Paradise will say, "O Allaah (swt) admit him to Paradise". And no Muslim asks Allaah for protection from Hell three times, but Hell will say, "O Allaah save him from me""*** (Sahih al-Jaami, 5/145, no.5506)

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that when the Prophet (saw) was discussing the angels who seek out gatherings of dhikr he said, "***Allaah (swt) asks them and He knows best, "What are they seeking protection from?" They tell Him, "From the Fire". He asks, "And have they seen it." They say, "No, by Allaah, O Rabb, They have not seen it." He says, "How would it be if they had seen it?" They say, "They would be even more afraid and anxious to escape it". He (swt) says, "Bear witness that I have forgiven them""***. (Sahih al-Jaami', 2/233, no. 2169)

al-Jannah

Paradise: the Eternal Abode

Paradise is the tremendous reward which Allaah (swt) has prepared for His beloved (awliyaa) and those who obey Him. It is complete joy and pleasure, where nothing is lacking and nothing can disturb its purity. What Allaah (swt) and His Messenger have told us about it makes out heads spin because our minds are not able to comprehend the greatness of such blessings.

Listen to the words of Allaah (swt) in this hadith qudsi:

"I have prepared for My righteous slaves that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and has never crossed the mind of any human being".

Then the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Recite, if you wish: "No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do"***. (32:17)

The joys of Paradise are far greater than the pleasures of this world, which pale into insignificance in comparison. al-Bukhaari reports from Sahl ibn Sa'd as-Sa'idee that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"A space the size of a whip in Paradise is better than this world and al that is in it"***. (Fath al-Baari, 6/319, an-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim 17/166)

Because admittance to Paradise and salvation from the Fire are according to Allaah's will and judgement, it is a great victory and tremendous success, as Allaah (swt) says:

"Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden, will have indeed attained the object of life [or: been successful]" (3:185)

"Allaah has promised to believers - men and women - Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein [forever], and beautiful mansions in Gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss is the Good Pleasure of Allaah. That is the supreme felicity [or success]". (9:72)

"...and those who obey Allaah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing underneath, to abide therein [forever] and that will be the supreme achievement". (4:13)

Admittance to Paradise

There is no doubt that the joy of the believers will be incomparable when they are led, group by honourable group, to the blessed Gardens of Paradise.

When they reach Paradise its gates will be opened for them, and they will be welcomed by noble angels congratulating them on their safe arrival after suffering so much hardship and witnessing so much horror:

"And those who feared their Rabb will be led to the garden in crowds, until, behold, they arrive there; its gates will be opened and its keepers will say "Peace be upon you! Well have you done! Enter here, to dwell therein". (39:73)

In other words, your words, thoughts and deeds were good so your hearts and souls became pure and for that you deserve Paradise.

The Believers Will Be Purified Before They Enter Paradise

After the Believers have passed over as-Siraat (the bridge over Hell), they will be kept on a bridge between Paradise and Hell, where they will be purified by means of their settling any wrongs that existed between any of them in this world. Then when they enter paradise they will be pure and clean, none of them bearing any ill-will towards another or demanding anything of another.al-Bukhaari reported from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"The believers will be saved from the Fire then they will be kept on a bridge between Paradise and Hell. They will settle their accounts with one another for any wrongs that existed between them in this world, until they are purified and cleansed, and will be permitted to enter Paradise. By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, each of them will know his dwelling in Paradise better than he knew his dwelling in this world". (Sahih al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab al-Qisas Yawm al-Qiyamah, Fath al-Baari, 11/395)

Our Prophet (saw) will be the first to ask for the gates of paradise to be opened, after Aadam, the father of mankind, and all the other great Prophets refuse this task.

The First People to Enter Paradise

The first of mankind to enter Paradise will be our Prophet Muhammad (saw) and the first nation to enter Paradise will be his ummah. The first member of this ummah to enter will be Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (ra).

Ibn Katheer quotes a number of Hadith [an-Nihayah, 2/213] that state this such as the report of Muslim from Anas (ra) according to which the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "***I will be the first one to knock at the gates of Paradise".***

Muslim also reported from Anas that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"I will come to the gates of paradise and ask for it to be opened. The gatekeeper will ask, "Who are you?" I will say, "Muhammad". The gatekeeper will say, "I was ordered not to open the gate for anyone else before you"".***

al-Bukhaari, Muslim and an-Nasaa'ee report from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said: ***"We are the last, but we will be the first on the Day of Resurrection. We will be the first of mankind to enter Paradise".***

Abu Dawood reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Jibreel came to me, and showed me the gate of Paradise through which my ummah will enter".*** Abu Bakr said, "O Messenger of Allaah (saw), would that I had been with you to see it!". The Messenger of Allaah (saw) ***"But you, O Abu Bakr, will be the first of my ummah to enter Paradise".***

Those Who Will Enter Paradise Without Being Called to Account

The first group of this ummah who will enter Paradise will be those who were pre-eminent in their imaan, taqwaa, righteous deeds and adherence to the true religion. They will enter Paradise in one rank: the first of them will not enter until the last of them enters, and they will be as beautiful as the full moon.

Al-Bukhaari reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"The first group to enter Paradise will be as beautiful as the full moon. They will not spit, blow their noses or excrete. Their vessels will be fo gold, their combs of gold and silver, their incense o aloe, and their sweat of musk. Each of them will have two wives, the marrow of whose leg-bones will be visible through their flesh because of their extreme beauty. There will be no differences or hatred among them (the people of Paradise); their hearts will be as one, and they will glorify Allaah (swt) morning and evening". (Kitaab Bid' al-Khalq, Baab Ma Jaa' fi Sifaat al-Jannah, Fath al-Baari, 6/318; Muslim, at-Tirmidhi)

al-Bukhaari reports from Sahl ibn Sa'd (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"Seventy thousand - or seven hundred thousand - of my ummah will enter Paradise; the first of them will not enter until the last of them does so, and their faces will look like the full moon".*** (Fath al-Baari, 6/319)

It is true that with each one of these seventy, Allaah (swt) will give His Prophet seventy thousand. Ahmad reports with a saheeh isnaad from Abu Bakr (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"I have been given seventy thousand of my ummah, who will enter Paradise without being called to account. Their faces will be like the full moon, and their hearts will be as one. I asked my Rabb, may He be glorified, for more, and He gave me, along with each of them, seventy thousand more". (Saheeh al-Jaami', 1/350, no. 1068)

Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Hibbaan report with a saheeh isnaad from Abu Umaamah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"My Rabb promised me that seventy thousand of my ummah would enter Paradise without being called to account and without being punished, and with each one will be seventy thousand, and three handfuls of people picked up by my Rabb [i.e. it will be a great number]".*** (Saheeh al-Jaami' 6/108, no. 2988).

The Prophet (saw) described the characteristics of these seventy thousand.

al-Bukhaari reports from Ibn 'Abbaas that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"I was shown the nations, and I saw a Prophet pass by with a group of his people, and another with a band of his people, another with only ten, another with five, and another on his own (with no followers). Then I looked and saw a large crowd of people. I asked, "O Jibreel, are these my ummah?" He said, "No, but look at the horizon." So I looked, and saw a huge multitude of people. Jibreel said, "These are your ummah, and those seventy thousand in front will not be called to account or punished."*** *I asked, "Why?" He said,* ***"They did not treat themselves with branding (cauterisation) or with ruqyaa (charms) and they did not see evil omens in things (i.e they were not superstitious): they put their trust only in their Rabb"".*** *'Ukaasha ibn Mihsan stood up and said, "Pray to Allaah (swt) to make me one of them". The Prophet (saw) said,* ***"O Allaah (swt) make him one of them".*** *Then another man stood up and said, "Ask Allaah (swt) to make me one of them". The Prophet (saw) said,* ***'Ukaasha has preceded you"***. (Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab Yadhkul al-Jannah Sab'un Alfan bi Ghayri Hisaab, Fath al-Baari, 11/405)

These may be the ones whom Allaah (swt) has called al-Muqarraboon (those nearest to Allaah swt):

"And those foremost [in faith] will be foremost [in the Hereafter]. These will be those nearest to Allaah [al-Muqarraboon], in the Gardens of Bliss". (56:10-12)

More of them will come from the early generations than from the later generations:

"A multitude of those [foremost] will be from the first generations [who embraced Islaam], and a few of those [foremost] will be from the later generations". (56:13-14)

The Poor Will Enter Jannah Ahead of the Rich

Muslim reports from 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said ***"The poor of the Muhajireen will enter Paradise forty years ahead of the rich"***. (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/663, no. 5235)

at-Tirmidhi reported from Abu Sa'eed, and Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah reported from Abu Hurayrah, that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"The poor of the Muhajireen will enter Paradise five hundred years ahead of the rich of the Muhajireen"*** (Saheeh al-Jaami' 4/90, no.4104).

Elsewhere the Prophet (saw) explained that these are the people who have nothing to be brought account for, and this is in addition to their jihaad and virtue. al-Haakim reported from 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Do you know who will be the first of my ummah to enter Paradise?" I said, "Allaah and His Messenger know best". He said, "The poor of the Muhajireen. They will come to the gate of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection and ask for it to be opened. The gatekeepers will say to them, "Have you been brought to account?" They will say, "What do we need to be brought to account for? We were carrying our swords and fighting for the sake of Allaah (swt) until we died." Then the gates will be opened for them and they will stay there for forty years before anyone else enters".*** (Silsilah al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 2/532, no. 853, al-Haakim said it is sahih according to the conditions of al-Bukhaari and Muslim).

al-Bukhaari reports from Usaamah ibn Zayd that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"I stood by the gate of Paradise and saw that the majority of those who entered were the poor and wretched. The rich [Muslims] were detained while the people of Hell were ordered to be taken to Hell".*** (Sahih al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, BAab Sifaat al-Jannah, wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 2/345)

Some of the hadith quoted above stated that the poor will enter Paradise forty years ahead of other people while others state that the difference will be five hundred years. The two statements may be reconciled by pointing out that the poor a re not all alike, neither are the rich. As al-Qurtubee suggested (at-Tadhkirah, p.470) the poor vary in the strength of their imaan and their achievements, and the same applies to the rich. If we think in terms of the first of the poor and the last of the rich to enter Paradise then the time-span will be five hundred years, but if we are thinking of the last of the poor and the first of the rich, then the time span is forty years. And Allaah knows best." (Ibn Katheer, an-Nihaayah, 2/345)

The First Three to Enter Jannah

at-Tirmidhi reported with a hasan isnaad from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saw) said:

"I was shown the first three to enter Paradise: the Shaheed (the martyr); the one who is chaste and proud; and the slave who worships Allaah (swt) with devotion and is faithful and sincere towards his master" (Jaami' al-Usool, 10/535, attributed to Ahmad, al-Haakim and al-Bayhaqi)

The Sinners Among the Believers Will Enter Paradise

(i) They will be brought forth from Hell and will enter Paradise by means of intercession.

Muslim reports from Abu Sa'eed that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"The people of Hell will remain there, never dying, and never living. But there are people who will enter Hell because of their sins, and will be killed therein, so that they become like coals. Permission will be granted for intercession to be made, and they will be brought forth in groups and spread on rivers of Paradise, and it will be said, "O people of Paradise, pour water on them. Then they will grow like seeds in the silt left by a flood". [Muslim, Kitaab al-Imaan, Baab as-Shafa'ah wa Ikhraaj al-Muwahiddin min an-Naar, 1/172]

Muslim also reports from Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Some people will be brought out of the Fire, having been burnt all over except for their faces, and they will enter Paradise"***. [Muslim, Kitaab al-Imaam, Baab adna Ahl al-Jannah Manzilatan, 1/178]

The people of Paradise will call these people who are brought out of Hell and admitted to Paradise, al-Jahannamiyyoon. al-Bukhaari reports from 'Imraan ibn Husayn (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said, "***Some people will be brought out of Hell through the intercession of Muhammad (saw). They will enter Paradise and will be known as al-Jahannamiyyoon."*** [Sahih al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 11/418. They are also mentioned in a hadith narrated from Jaabir by Muslim, 1/179 and al-Bukhaari from Anas, Fath al-Baari 11/416]

According to another sahih hadith narrated by Jaabir: "The Prophet (saw) said, "***They will be brought out of the Fire through intercession, as if they are tha'areer"***. I asked, "What are tha'areer?" He said, "***Daghabis [snake cucumbers]""***. [al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab Sifaah al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 11/416]

Muslim reports a lengthy hadith from Abu Hurayrah, in which the Prophet (saw) describes the Hereafter, and in which he says: ***"...When Allaah (swt) has finished judging mankind, and wants to bring whomever He wills out of Hell by His Mercy, He will order angels to bring forth those upon who He wishes to bestow His mercy of the people who never associated anything in worship with Allaah (swt), and who said, "Laa ilaaha illaah Allaah". The angels will recognise them in Hell, and will known them by the mark of sujood on their foreheads. The Fire will consume all of a man except the mark of sujood which Allaah (swt) has forbidden the Fire to consume. They will be brought forth, having been burned in the Fire, the water of life will be poured on then, and they will grow like seeds left by still after a flood".*** [Saheeh Muslim, Kitaab al-Imaan, Baab ar-Ru'yah, 1/299, no. 182]

It was reported in more than one hadith that Allaah (swt) will bring forth from hell whoever has a dinaar's weight of faith in his heart, or even half a dinaar's weight or an atom's weight. Moreover, people will be brought forth who never did any good deeds at all. Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri reported that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Allaah (swt) will admit the people of Paradise to Paradise and He will admit whomsoever He will by His Mercy. And He will admit the people of Hell to Hell, then He will say, "Look for anyone who has the weight of a mustard seed of faith in his heart, and bring him out"".*** [Saheeh Muslim, Kitaab al-Imaan, Baab Ithbat ash-Shafa'ah wa Ikhraaj al-Muwwahhadeen, 1/172]

One of the reports about Hell is the hadeeth narrated by Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah (ra) concerning entering Hellfire:

"Then intercession will be permitted and they will interceded until whoever says Laa ilaaha illa Allaah and has a barley grain's worth of goodness in his heart will be brought forth. They will be made to stand in the courtyard of paradise and the people of Paradise will start to pour water over them, until they begin to grow like seeds left by silt after a flood. All traces of the Fire will disappear, then he [the person who was brought out of Hell] will keep asking until he is given the equivalent of this world and ten times more". [Sahih Muslim, Baab adna Ahl al-Jannah Manzilatan, 1/178]

Anas ibn Maalik reported that the Prophet (saw) said: "***Whoever says Laa ilaaha illaa Allaah and has a barely grain's weight of goodness in his heart will be brought out of the Fire. Then whoever says, "Laa ilaaha illaa Allaah" and has a wheat grains weight of goodness in his heart will be brought out of the Fire. Then whoever says, Laa Ilaaha illaa Allaah and has an atom's-weight of goodness in his heart will be brought out of the Fire".*** [Sahih Muslim, Kitaab al-Imaan, Baab adna Ahl al-Jannah Manzilatan, 1/182]

There are many hadiths that discuss this matter.

(ii) Opinions of different groups on intercession.

The Khawaarij and Mu'tazilah deny that there will be any intercession to protect those who are guilty of major sins and have been ordered to enter Hell from doing so, or to bring forth those who have already entered.

al-Qurtubee said, "*This intercession was denied by the innovators, Khawaarij and Mu'tazilah. Their denial is based on their corrupt principles, which are based on what they saw as rational thinking".* [1]

These reprehensible ideas which go against the muttawaatir sahih hadith, emerged while the Sahabah were still alive. Muslim reports in his sahih from Yazeed al-Faqeer, who says: "I was infatuated with one of the ideas of the Khawaarij, so a large group of us went out, intending to go for Hajj and then go out to fight the people. We came to Madinah, where we found Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah sitting by a pillar, narrated hadith to the people. When he mentioned al-Jahannamiyyoon, I said, "*O Companion of the Messenger of Allaah, what is this that you are narrating, when Allaah (swt) says: "**And who You admit to the Fire, truly You cover with shame."** [3:192] and **"....everytime they wish to get away therefrom, they will be put back thereto.."** [32:20] So what is it that you are saying*?" He said, *"Have you read the Qur'aan?"* I said, "Yes." He asked, "*Have you heard about the [exalted] position of Muhammad [i.e. the position to which Allaah swt would raise him]*?" I said, "Yes". He said, *"That is the honoured position of Muhammad by which Allaah (swt) will bring out whosoever He wishes to bring out".* Then he described as-Siraat [the bridge over Hell] and the passing of the people over it, then said, *"I am afraid that I may not have remembered exactly what he said. But he said that people would be brought out of Hell after entering it. He meant that they would come out looking like the wood of the ebony tree; they would enter one of the rivers of paradise and bathe in it, then they would come out looking [white] like sheets of paper". We turned back and said, "Woe to you! Do you think this sheikh would tell lies about the Messenger of Allaah (saw)? We turned back [from the views of the Khawaarij] and by Allaah (swt) every one of us abandoned this group except for one man".* [Sahih Muslim, Kitaab al-Imaan, Baab adna Ahl al-Jannah Manzilatan, 1/179, no.191]

The Khawaarij and Mu'tazilah went ot extremes with their claim that people guilty of major sins [al-Kabaair] would never come out of Hell, and that the intercession of those who interceded would be of no avail for them. The Murji'ah went to the opposite extreme by stating that no-one who was guilty of major sins would necessarily enter Hell, and believing that all such people would enter Paradise without being punished at all. Both groups are in conflict with the well-known muttawaatir Sunnah and with the consensus of the Salaf and Imaams of this ummah. Allaah (swt) has guided Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah to the truth in this matter where others have erred, by His Will. They [Ahl as-Sunnah] believe that hose who are guilty of major sins are subject to the will of Allaah (swt); if He wills, He will forgive them, out of mercy, and If He wills, He will punish them for His sins then admit them to Paradise by His Mercy.

"Allaah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him, but He forgives anything else, to whom He pleases." (4:48)

"Say: O My Slaves who have transgressed against themselves [by committing evil deeds and sins]! Despair not of the Mercy of Allaah, verily Allaah forgives all sins. Truly He is Oft-forgiving, All-Merciful". (39:53)

Shirk will not be forgiven, but any other sin is subject to the Will of Allaah. The one who repents will be as if he never sinned. The aayaat that the Khawaarij use to prove that intercession will not be accepted actually refers to the kinds of intercession believed in by the mushrikeen. They think that interceding with Allaah is like interceding with rulers or authorities on earth, where a person may intercede with someone (an authority figure) without that person's permission and even if the one in authority is displeased with the one on whose half intercession is made. This is not so in the case of Allaah (swt) may He be glorified. Several texts reject this type of intercession, for example:

"Then guard yourselves against A Day when one soul shall not avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from him nor will compensation be taken from him nor shall anyone be helped [from outside]" (2:48)

"Then will no intercession of [any] intercessors profit them". (74:48)

"..No intimate friend, nor intercessor will the wrongdoers have, who could be listened to". (40:18)

Several texts explain that no-one can intercede with Allaah except with His permission and unless He is pleased both with the intercessor and the one for whom he seeks to intercede:

"Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His permission?" (2:255)

"and they cannot interceded except for him with whom He is pleased" (21:28)

"And there are many angels in the heavens, whose intercession will avail nothing except after Allaah has given leave for whom He wills and pleases". (53:26).

Allaah (swt) also says about the angels: **"He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot intercede except for him with whom He is pleased. And they stand in awe for fear of him".** (21:28)

"No intercession can avail in His presence, except for those to whom He has granted permission". (34:23)

These aayaat reject and refute the kind of intercession believed in by the mushrikeen, i.e. intercession via angels, prophets and righteous people, ("saints"), and confirm only that intercession which takes place with the permission of Allaah (swt) and when He is pleased with both the intercessor and the one on whose behalf he intercedes. Allaah (swt) is not pleased with the kuffaar and mushrikeen. As for the disobedient monotheists, intercessors will interceded for them, but they will not intercede for a mushrik. al-Bukhaari narrated that Abu Hurayrah (ra) said, "I said, "O Messenger of Allaah, who will be the most happy with your intercession on the Day of Resurrection?" He said, "***I thought, O Abu Hurayrah, that no one would ask me this question before you, because I have seen that you are so eager to learn hadith. The one who will be the most happy with my intercession on the Day of Resurrection will be the one who says Laa ilaaha illaa Allaah sincerely and from the heart""***. [al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 11/418]

[1] al-Khawaarij are a sect that emerged after the battle of Siffin; they denounced 'Alee and Mu'awiyah, and whoever followed them, as kaafirs, and claimed that whoever was disobedient to Allaah (swt) would remain forever in Hell. The Mu'tazilah are the followers of Waasil ibn 'Ataa' who believe in the Mu'tazili doctrine that whoever commits major sins will remain eternally in Hell, but does not judge their position in this life.

The Last Person to Enter Paradise

The Prophet (saw) has told us about the last man who will be brought out of Hell and into Paradise and the conversation that will take place between him and his Rabb, and the incredibly great honour that Allaah (swt) will bestow upon him. Ibn al-Ithir collected all the hadith on this topic in Jami' al-Usool from which we will quote the following:

(i) 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'oud (ra) said:"The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "***I know the last of the people of Hell who will be brought forth from it, and the last of the people of Paradise to enter it. It is a man who will come out of Hell crawling on all fours." Allaah will say to him, "Go and enter Paradise". So he will come to it and will suppose that it is full. He will go back and say, "My Rabb, I found it full". Allaah (swt) will say, "Go and enter Paradise for there you have something like the world and ten times over [or you have something ten times better than the world]. He will says, "Are you making fun of me - or laughing at me - and You are the Sovereign of all?" I ['Abdullaah] saw the Messenger of Allaah (saw) smiling so broadly that his back teeth were visible. He used to say, "That is the one who is lowest in status of the people of Paradise".*** [al-Bukhaari, 11/386, ar-Riqaaq, at-Tawheed Baab Kalaam ar-Rabb 'azza wa jall yawm al-qiyamah ma'a al-anbiyaa wa ghayrihim; and Muslim, with slight variation, no. 186, Baab aakhir Ahl an-Naar Khurujan; and at-Tirmidhi, no. 2598 in Safah Jahanam, Ch. 10]

(ii) 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'oud reported that the Messenger of Allaah (Saw) said: ***"The last person to enter paradise will be a man who will alternately walk, stagger and be touched by the Fire. Once he has passed out of the Fire, he will turn to face it and say, "Blessed be He Who has saved me from you. Allaah (swt) has given me something that He did not give to the earlier and later generations. Then a tree will be raised up for him, and he will say, "O my Rabb, bring me closer to this tree so that I may enjoy its shade and drink of its water". Allaah (swt) will say, "O son of Aadam perhaps if I grant you this, you will ask Me for something else?" He will say, "No, O Rabb, I promise that I will not ask for anything else". Allaah (swt) will excuse him because he is seeing something that he has no patience to resist so he will bring him closer and he will enjoy its shade and drink its water. Then another tree, better than the first, will be raised up for him and he will say, "O my Rabb, bring me near to this tree so that I may drink its water and enjoy its shade, then I will not ask you for anything more". Allaah (swt) will say, "O son of Aadam did you not promise Me that you would not ask me for anything else? Perhaps if I bring you closer to this tree you will ask for more?" So the man will promise not to ask for any more, and Allaah will excuse him because he is seeing something that he has no patience to resist, so He will bring him closer and he will enjoy its shade and drink its water. Then a third tree will be raised up at the gate of paradise, and it will be better than the first two. The man will say, "O My Rabb, bring me closer to this [tree] so that I may enjoy its shade and drink its water, and I will not ask for anything more." Allaah will say, "O son of Aadam, did you not promise Me that you would not ask Me for anything more?" He will say, "Yes, O Rabb, I will not ask you for anything more." His Rabb, may He be glorified, will excuse him because he is seeing something which he has no patience to resist, so He will bring him closer. When he is brought close, he will hear the voices of the people of Paradise, and will say, "O my Rabb, admit me to it." Allaah (swt) will say, "O son of Aadam what do you want so that you will never ask Me for anything else? Will it please you if I give you the world and as much again?" He will say, "O Rabb, are You making fun of me when You are the Rabb al-Aaalameen?" Ibn Mas'oud smiled and said, "Why do you not ask me why I am smiling?" They asked, "Why are you smiling?" He said, "Because the Messenger of Allaah (saw) smiled". They asked, "Why are you smiling, O Messenger of Allaah (saw)?" He said, "Because the Rabb of the Worlds will smile when He is asked, "Are You making fun of me when You are the Rabb of the Worlds?" He will say, "I am not making fun of you, but I am able to do whatever I will""".*** [Muslim, no. 187, Kitaab al-Imaan, Baab aakhir an-Naar khurujan]

And in the version of Abu Sa'eed, he adds, ***"Allaah (swt) will tell him, "ask for such and such" and when he has stated his wishes, Allaah (swt) will say, "You will have them and ten times more". Then he will enter his house [in Paradise] and his two wives from among al-hoor al-'eeyn will***

enter and say, "Praise be to Allaah (swt) who has created you for us and created us for you". He will say, "No one has ever been given anything like that which I have been given." [reported by Muslim, no.188 Kitaab al-Imaan, Baab adna Ahl al-Jannah manzilatan]

Those Who Will Enter Paradise Before the Day of Resurrection

The first human being ever to enter Paradise was the father of mankind, Aadam (as),

"O Aadam! Dwell you and your wife in the Garden and enjoy [its good things] as you wish, but approach not this tree or you run into harm and transgression". (7:19)

But Aadam disobeyed Allaah by eating from the tree which Allaah (swt) had forbidden him to eat from, so Allaah (swt) sent him down from the Garden of Paradise to this world of distress and misery:

"We had already, beforehand, taken the covenant of Aadam, but he forgot, and We found on his part no firm will-power. When We said to the angels, "Prostrate yourselves to Aadam". They prostrated themselves but not Iblees, he refused. Then we said, "O Aadam! Verily, this is an enemy to you and your wife. So let him not get you both out of the Garden, so that you are landed in misery. There is in it [enough provision] for you not to go hungry nor to go naked, Nor to suffer from thirst nor from the sun's heat". But Shaytaan whispered evil to him, he said, "O Aadam, Shall I lead you to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?" As a result they both ate of the tree and so their nakedness appeared to them, and they began to sew together leaves from the Garden for their covering. Thus did Aadam disobey his Rabb and allow himself to be seduced. But his Rabb chose him [for His Grace]; He turned to him with forgiveness, and gave him guidance. He [Allaah] said, "Get you down, both of you - all together - from the Garden, with enmity one to another." [20:115-123]

The Messenger of Allaah (saw) also saw Paradise. al-Bukhaari reports from 'Imraan ibn Husayn that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"I have seen Paradise and I saw that its inhabitants are the poor.."*** [Sahih Bukhaari, Kitaab Bad' al-Khalq, Baab ma jaa fi Sifaat al-jannah, Fath al-Baari, 6/318]

Among those who will enter paradise before the Day of Resurrection are ash-Shuhadaa [the martyrs]. Muslim reports that Masruq said, "We asked Abdullaah ibn Mas'oud about this aayah:

"Think not of those who are slain in Allaah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Rabb" (3:169)

He said, "We asked about that too, and the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Their souls are in the bellies of green birds, and they have lights suspended from the Throne. They wander about in Paradise wherever they wish, then they take shelter in those lights. Their Rabb will suddenly come to them and ask," Do you desire anything?" They will say, "What thing could we wish for when we can wander wherever we wish in Paradise?" Allaah will come and ask this three times. When they see that they will not be allowed to giver no reply, they will say, "O Rabb, would that we could return our bodies and be killed for Your sake one more time." When Allaah (swt) sees that they have no wants or needs, they will be left alone"".*** (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/351, no. 3804)

Whoever dies will be shown his position in Paradise or Hell morning and evening. Muslim reports from Ibn 'Umar (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"When any one of you dies, he will be shown his position morning and evening. If he is one of the people of Paradise, then he will be one of the people of Paradise, and if he is one of the people of

Hell, then he will be one of the people of Hell and he will be told, "This is your position until Allaah (swt) resurrects you to it on the Day of Resurrection"". [Muslim, see Muslim bi sharh an-Nawawi, 17/300]

Paradise: There is Nothing Like It

The delights of Paradise surpass the imagination and defy description. They are like nothing known to the people of this world; no matter how advanced we may become, what we achieve is as nothing in comparison with the joys of the Hereafter. As is mentioned in several reports, there is nothing like Paradise:

"It is sparkling light, aromatic plants, a lofty palace, a flowing river, ripe fruit, a beautiful wife and abundant clothing, in an eternal abode of radiant joy, in beautiful soundly-constructed high houses". [Ibn Maajah, as-Sunan, Kitaab az-Zuhd, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah, 2/1448, no. 4332. Ibn Hibbaan narrated it in his saheeh]

The Sahabah asked the Prophet (saw) about the buildings of Paradise and he replied with a wonderful description:

"Bricks of gold and silver, and mortar of fragrant musk, pebbles of pearl and sapphire, and soil of saffron. Whoever enters it is filled with joy and will never feel miserable; he will live there forever and never die; their clothes will never wear out and their youth will never fade." [Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, ad-Daarimee, Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/29, sahih].

Allaah (swt) indeed spoke the truth when He (swt) said: **"And when you look there [in Paradise] you will see a delight [that cannot be imagined]. and a great dominion"** [76:20]

What Allaah (swt) has kept hidden from us the delights of Paradise is beyond our ability to comprehend: al-Bukhaari reported from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said that Allaah (swt) said, **"I have prepared for My slaves what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart can imagine".** Recite if you wish, **"No person know what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do."** (32:17).

In the version reported by Muslim from Abu Hurayrah, there is the addition, "***Never mind what Allaah has told you; <u>what He has not told you is EVEN greater".</u>***

The Gates of Paradise

Paradise has gates through which the believers, like the angels, will enter:

"'Adn [Eden - everlasting gardens] of Paradise, whose doors will open for them" [38:50]

"...And angels shall enter unto them from every gate [with the salutation]: "Peace be unto you for that you persevered in patience! How excellent is the final home!" [13:23-24]

Allaah (swt) has told us that these gates will be opened when the believers reach them, and they will be welcomed by the angels with greetings of peace:

"...til, when they reach it, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will say, "Salaamun 'alaykum! You have done well, so enter here to abide therein." [39:73]

The number of gates in Paradise is eight, one of which is called ar-Rayyaan, which is exclusively for those who fast.

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Sahl ibn Sa'eedi that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"In Paradise there are eight gates, one of which is called ar-Rayyaan. No one will enter it except those who fast, and when they have entered it will be locked behind them and no one else will enter it"***. [Ibn Katheer, an-Nihaayah, 2/214]

In addition to ar-Rayyaan, there are also gates for those who pray much, those who give in charity and those who fight in jihaad; Abu Hurayrah (ra) reported that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Whoever spends a pair [of anything] from his wealth for the sake of Allaah (swt) will be called from the gates of Paradise, and Paradise has eight agates. Whoever used to pray [regularly and properly] will be called from the gate of prayer; whoever use to give in charity will be called from the gate of charity' whoever used to fight in jihaad will be called from the gate of jihaad, and whoever used to fast [regularly] will be called from the gate of fasting".*** Abu Bakr (ra) said, *"By Allaah, it would not matter if a person was called from any of them but will anyone be called from all of them, O Messenger of Allaah (saw)?*" He said, ***"Yes, and I hope that you will be one of them"***. [saheeh, Ibn Katheer, an-Nihaayah, 2/214]

The Prophet (saw) also said, ***"Whoever performs wudhu and does it properly, then lifts his gaze to the sky and says, "Ashhadu an laa ilaaha illa Allaah, wahdahu laa shareeka lah, wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan 'abdahu wa rasuluhu, the eight gates of Paradise will be opened to him, and he will enter it through whichever one he wishes".*** [Muslim, Ahmad and others on the authority of 'Umar, an-Nihaayah, 2/219]

The Prophet (saw) told us that there is a gate, which is only for those who will not be called to account: this is the right-hand gate of Paradise. Everyone else will enter Paradise with the rest of the nations through the other gates. In a hadith about ash-Shafaa'ah (intercession) whose authenticity is agreed upon, Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (saw) said, "Allaah (swt) will say, ***"O Muhammad, admit those of your ummah who do not need to be brought to account through the right-hand gate and the others will enter through the other gates like the rest of the people.""***

In the same hadith, the Prophet (saw) described the <u>width of the gates of Paradise:</u>

"By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, the distance between two panesl of the gates of Paradise or between the two gateposts, is liek the distance between Makkaah and Hajar, or between Makkah and Basra" [an-Nihaayah, 2/221]

The Prophet (saw) has told us that the gates of Paradise are opened during Ramadhaan. al-Bukhaari, Muslim, and Ahmad report from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "***When the month of Ramadhan comes, the gates of heaven are opened".***

In some reports it states that the distance between the two gate-panels when they are open is that of a forty year journey.

The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"The distance between the two gate-panels of one of the gates of Paradise is the distance of forty-year's walking, but there will come a time when it is very crowded".*** [Ahmad in al-Musnad, Abu Na'eem in al-Hilyah, from Haakim ibn Mu'aawiyah from Mu'aawiyah, sahih; see also Muslim and Ahmad on the authority of 'Utbah ibn Ghazwaan]

And in the narration of at-Tabaraani reported in al-Mu'jam al-Kabeer from 'Abdullaah ibn Salaam, it is said ***"..and it [the gate] will become as crowded as a drinking-trough surrounded by thirsty camels".***

The Levels of Paradise

(i) Evidence that Paradise has various levels and its inhabitants will be in different categories

Paradise consists of levels, some of which are above others, and its people will be of differing levels and categories according to their position in Paradise. Allaah (swt) says:

"Whoever wishes for the quick passing [transitory enjoyment of this world] we readily grant him what We will for whom We like. Then afterwards, We have appointed for him Hell, he will burn therein disgraced and rejected, [-far away from Allaah's Mercy]. And whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it, with the necessary effort due to it, [i.e. righteous deeds of obedience to Allaah] while he is a believer [in tawheed] then such are the ones whose striving shall be appreciated, thanked and rewarded [by Allaah]. To each - these as well as those - We bestow from the bounties of your Rabb. And the bounties of your Rabb can never be forbidden" [17:18-20]

Allaah (swt) explains how He gives more of His bounty in this world or the next, as He (swt) wills, and His Bounty is not withheld [forbidden] from either the righteous or the sinful. Then He (swt) says:

"See how We prefer one above another [in this world] and verily, the Hereafter will be greater in degrees and greater in preference." [17:21]

Allaah (swt) explains that the differences between people in the Hereafter will be greater than the differences between them in this life, and the difference between the levels or ranks of the Hereafter is greater than the differences here in this life. Allaah (swt) also differentiates between His Prophets as He does between the rest of His believing slaves. Allaah (swt) says:

"Those Messengers! We preferred some to others; to some of them Allaah spoke [directly]; others He raised to degrees of [honour]; and to 'Eesa the son of Maryam, We gave clear proofs and evidence, and supported him with Ruh al-Quddus [Jibreel]..." [2:253]

and **"...And indeed We have preferred some of the Prophets above others.."** [17:55]

Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said ***"A strong believer is better and more beloved to Allaah (swt) than a weak one although both are good..."*** and al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Hurayrah and 'Amr ibn al-Aas that the Prophet (saw) said, "***If a judge seeks to form an independent judgement [ijtihaad] and is correct, he will have two rewards; if he seeks to form an independent judgement and is wrong, he will have one reward."***

Allaah, subhaanahu wa ta'ala, says: **"Not equal among you are those who spent and fought before the conquest [of Makkah] [with those among you who did so later]. Such are higher in degree that those who spent and fought afterwards. But to all, Allaah has promised the best [reward]."** [57:10]

And "**Not equal are those of the believers who sit [at home] except those who are disabled [by injury or are blind or lame, etc] and those who strive hard and fight in the Cause of Allaah with their wealth and their lives. Allaah has preferred in grades those who strive hard and fight with their wealth and their lives above those who sit [at home]. Unto each, Allaah has promised good [Paradise] but Allaah has preferred those who strive hard and fight, above those who sit [at home] by a huge reward; degrees of [higher] grades from Him, and Forgiveness and Mercy. And Allaah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, All-Merciful"**. [4:95-96]

"Do you consider the providing of drinking water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of al-Masjid al-Haram [at Makkah] as equal to the worth of those who believe in Allaah and the Last Day, and strive hard and fight in the Cause of Allaah? They are not equal before Allaah. And Allaah guides not those people who are the Dhaalimoon. Those who believed and emigrated and strove hard and fought in Allaah's Cause with their wealth and their lives are far higher in degree with Allaah. They are the successful. Their Rabb gives them glad tidings of a Mercy from Him, and that He is pleased and of Gardens for them wherein are everlasting delights. They will dwell therein forever. Verily, with Allaah is a great reward". [9:19-22]

"Is one who is obedient to Allaah prostrating himself or standing [in prayer]during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Rabb [like one who disbelievers]? Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?" It is only men of understanding who will remember [i.e. learn a lesson from Allaah's Signs]" [39:9]

The Prophet (saw) said, narrated by al-Bukhaari from Abu Hurayrah, ***"...Paradise has one hundred levels which Allaah has reserved for the mujaahideen who fight in His Cause and the distance between each of the two grades is like the distance between the heavens and the earth. So when you ask Allaah for something, ask for al-Firdaws which is the best and highest part of Paradise. Above it is the throne of the Most Merciful, and from it originate the rivers of Paradise"***. [al-Bukhaari in as-Saheeh, Kitaab al-Jihaad, Baab Darajat al-Mujaahideen fi Sabeelillaah, Fath al-Baari, 6/11]

al-Bukhaari also reports from Anas that Umm Harithah came to the Prophet (saw) when her son Harithah had been martyred at Badr, killed by an arrow. She said, *"O Messenger of Allaah, you know how dear Harithah was to my heart. If he is in Paradise, I will not weep over him, but if he is not there, you will see what I do".* He said, ***"Is there only one Paradise? There are many Paradises and he is in al-Firdaws, the Highest."*** [Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah, wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 11/418]

Differences between the Levels of al-Jannah

The Prophet (saw) explained that the people will be in different levels in Paradise according to their status. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The people of Paradise will look at the people dwelling in the chambers above them in the same way that people look at a brilliant star shining far away on the horizon, in the East or West, because of their superiority [in reward] over them."*** The people asked, *"O Messenger of Allaah, are these the dwellings of the Prophets which no one else can attain?*" He replied, ***"No by the One in Whose Hand is my soul, they are for the men who believed in Allaah, and also in His Messengers."*** [Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Bid' al-Khalq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 6/220; Saheeh Muslim Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab tara'i Ahl al-Jannah Ahl al-Ghuraf, 4/2177, no. 2831]

Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Maajah and Ibn Hibbaan reported from Abu Sa'eed that the Prophet (saw) said,"***The people in the higher levels will be seen by those below them as if they were looking at a star rising on the horizon. Abu Bakr and 'Umar will be among them; what good people they are!"*** [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 2/187, no. 2026]

al-Qurtubee said, "Know that these chambers will differ in height, and appearance according to the deeds of their occupants. Some of them will be higher than others. When the Prophet (saw) said, "No by the One is Whose Hand is my soul, they are for the men who believed in Allaah (swt) and also in His Messengers; he did not mention deeds or anything other than faith and belief in the Messengers, with no doubts or questions. Otherwise, how could these chambers be reached through the faith and belief of the ordinary people? If that were the case, then all the Muslims would reach these highest levels, and that is impossible" as Allaah says, **"Those will be rewarded with the highest place [in Paradise] because of their patience.."** [25:75]

This patience often involved self sacrifice and being steadfast for the sake of Allaah, focussing on Him, being a true slave to Him. These are the attributes of al-Muqarraboon, as Allaah (swt) says:

"And it is not your wealth, nor your children that bring you nearer to Us, but only he [will please Us] who believes and does righteous deeds; for such there will be twofold reward for what they did, and they will reside in the high dwellings [Paradise] in peace and security". [34:37]

Here Allaah mentioned the highest chambers or dwellings of Paradise and states that they will not be attained by means of wealth and children, but through faith and righteous deeds then they will have a double reward. Their place will be the high dwellings, which tells you that this is faith that gives one tranquility and certainty, and fills the heart. A person with such faith is content no matter what happens to him, and in all situations and circumstances. If he does a good deed, he does not mix it with the opposite, which are evil deeds. Good deeds that are uncontaminated with evil deeds cannot be achieved except by the one whose imaan is very great and who is content and has no doubts, no matter what his circumstances. The faith and deeds of the one whose good deeds are contaminated are not like that, so his status will be lower" [al-Qurtubee, at-Tadhkirah, p. 464]

The inhabitants of the highest levels of Paradise will enjoy greater pleasures than the people below them. Allaah (swt) has promised two gardens to those who fear Him:

"But for him who fears the standing before his Rabb, there will be two gardens" [55:46]

Allaah (swt) described these Gardens, then He (swt) said, **"And besides these two, there are two other Gardens [i.e. in Paradise]"** [55:62]

These two gardens will be lower in status. Whoever thinks of the characteristics of the two gardens which Allaah mentioned second will realise that they are lower than the first two, because the first two are for the muqarraboon [those who are close to Allaah], whilst the second two are for ashaab al-yameen [those of the Right Hand] as Ibn 'Abbaas and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari said [at-Tadhkirah, 440].

al-Qurtubee said:

"When He described the two pairs of gardens, He referred to the difference between them. Describing the first two, He said **"in them [both] will be two springs flowing free"** [55:50] whereas in the second two "**..will be two springs gushing forth water"** [55:66]. Gushing or bubbling water is not the same as flowing water; bubbling is of a lesser degree than flowing.

Allaah says that in the first two gardens **"..will be every kind of fruit in pairs"** [55:52] - all kinds of fruit, well known and rare, moist and dry; this is a general statement. But in the second two gardens **"..will be fruits, date palms and pomegranates"** [55:68] Allaah does not say that there would be every kind of fruit in pairs.

In the first two gardens the people will be "**reclining upon the couches lined with silk brocade"** [55:54], while in the second two gardens they will be **"reclining on green cushions and rich beautiful mattresses"** [55:76] which means embellished or embroidered, and there is no doubt that a couch lined with silk brocade is superior to an embroidered cushion.

The Hoor al-'Eeyn in the first two gardens are described as **"like rubies and coral"** [55:58] whilst those in the second two gardens are described as **"fair [wives] good and beautiful"** [55:70]; not everything that is beautiful is as beautiful as rubies and coral.

The first two gardens are described as **"with spreading branches"** [55:48] while the second two are **"dark green [in colour]"** [55:64] so intensely green that it is almost black. The first two clearly have many bushes and trees, whilst the second two are described simply as being green" [at-Tadkhirah, p. 440]

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "***Two gardens of silver, their vessels and everything in them and two gardens of gold, their vessels and everything in them, and there will be nothing between the people and their seeing Allaah, except the garment of pride over His Face in the Paradise of 'Adn"*** [Jaami' al-Usool, 10/498, no. 8029]

Allaah (swt) described the drink of the pious in Paradise:

"Verily the Abraar [pious, who fear Allaah and avoid evil] will drink a cup [of wine] mixed with water from a spring in Paradise called Kafoor" [76:5]

"And they will be given to drink there a cup [of wine] mixed with Zanjabeel [ginger]" [76:17]

It seems - and Allaah Knows Best - that this is for Ahl al-Yameen. Elsewhere Allaah (swt) says

"It [that wine] will be mixed with tasneem, A spring whereof drink those nearest to Allaah" [83:27-28].

Ahl al-Yameen will drink something mixed with Tasneem, whilst al-Muqarraboon will drink a pure drink of Tasneem. Tasneem is the name of a spring in Paradise.

The Highest and Lowest Positions in Paradise

Muslim reports from al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"Musaa asked his Rabb, *"Who will have the lowest position in Paradise?"* Allaah said, ***"A man who will come after the people of Paradise have entered Paradise. He will be told, "Enter Paradise", and he will say, "O my Rabb, how? The people have already taken their places." He will be asked, "Will you not be content if you could have the equivalent of a kingdom on earth?" He will say, "Yes, my Rabb". So he will be told, "You will have that and as much again, and as much again, and as much again, and as much again." On the fifth time, he will say, "I am content with that, my Rabb". He will be told, "You will have all that and ten times more; you will have whatever your heart desires and whatever will delight your eyes." The man will say, "I am content with that".***

Musaa asked, "My Rabb, who will have the highest status in Paradise?" Allaah said, ***"They are those whom I choose. I establish their honour with My own hand and then set a seal over it, [and they will be blessed with Bounties] which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human mind can comprehend.***"" This confirmed by the words of Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted, **"No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do".** [32:17]

The Highest Position in Paradise

The highest position in Paradise which will be attained by only one person is called al-Waseelah. It will be attained, insha'Allaah, by the Chosen Prophet, the best of Allaah's creation, our Prophet Muhammad (saw).

This is narrated in a hadith narrated by al-Bukhaari from Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah according to which the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Whoever says, when he hears the call to prayer, "Allaahumma Rabba hadhihi-da'wati-tammah, was-salaatil-qaa'imah, aati muhammadan al-waseelata wal-fadeelata, wab'aththu maqaaman mahmoodan alladhi wa'adtahu [O Allaah, Lord of this Perfect Call and the Prayer to be Offered, grant Muhammad al-Waseelah - the highest position in Paradise - and also the eminence and resurrect him to the praised position You have promised], intercession for him will be granted on the Day of Resurrection."***

Muslim reported that 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr al-'Aas said, "I heard the Messenger of Allaah (saw) say, ***"When you hear the muaddhin call, say what he says, then send blessings on me, for whoever sends blessings on me, Allaah (swt) will return it to him tenfold. Then ask Allaah to grant me al-Waseelah, for whoever asks Allaah (swt) to grant me al-Waseelah intercession will be granted for him.""***

The Sahaabah asked the Prophet (saw) "What is al-Waseelah?" He said, ***"It is the highest level of Paradise, which only one man will reach, and I hope that I will be the one".*** [Ahmad from Abu Hurayrah]

The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"al-Waseelah is a rank above which there is no other in the sight of Allaah (swt). Ask Allaah (swt) to grant me al-Waseelah"*** [Ahmad from Abu Sa'eed, See Ibn Katheer, an-Nihaayah, 2/2332]

Those Who Take their Positions in the Highest Levels

Among those who will occupy the highest levels in Paradise are the shuhaadaa, the best of whom are those who fight in the front ranks and never turn away until they are killed. Ahmad and at-Tabaraani report with a saheeh isnaad from Na'eem ibn Hamar (1) that the Prophet (saw) said, "***The best of the Shuhaadaa are those who fight in the first rank, and do not turn their facesaway until they are killed. They will have the pleasure of occupying the highest dwellings in Paradise. Your Rabb will smile at them, and whenever your Rabb smiles upon any of His Slaves, that person will not be brought to account".*** [Musnad Ahmad, Kitaab az-Zuhd, Baab al-Ihsaan ila al-armila wal-masaakeen wal-yateem 2/2286, hadith no. 2982]

The one who helps widows and the destitute will have the status of a mujaahid in Paradise. Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The one who helps widows and the destitute is like one who fights in jihaad for the sake of Allaah (swt)."*** I [the narrator] think he said, ***"And he is like the one who stands all night in prayer and never sleeps, and like the one who fasts continually and never breaks his fast"***. [Saheeh Muslim, Kitaab az-Zuhd, Baab al-Ihsaan, ila al-armilah wal-miskeen wal-yateem, 2/2286, no. 2982]

The one who sponsors an orphan will be close to the Prophet (saw) in Paradise. Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The one who sponsors an orphan, whether from his own wealth or from the orphan's wealth, I and he will be like these two in Paradise,"*** - and Maalik [the narrator] gestured with his forefinger and middle finger. [Saheeh Muslim, Kitaab az-Zuhd, 2/2286, no. 2982; "lahu aw ghayrihi" - whether from his own wealth or from the orphan's wealth - means whether he supports him from his own wealth or is a legal guardian over the orphan and the orphan's wealth]

Allaah (swt) will raise the status of parents by the blessing of their children's du'aa. Ahmad reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Allaah (swt) will raise the status of His righteous slave in Paradise, and he will say, "O my Rabb, how could I deserve this?" He will say, "Because your child sought forgiveness for you.""***

Ibn Katheer said, "This is a saheeh isnaad although none of the authors of the six books reported it. But there is a corroborating report in Saheeh Muslim from Abu Hurayrah (ra), according to which the Prophet (saw) said, ***"When a son of Aadam dies his good works come to an end, except for three: Sadaqah Jaariyah [ongoing charity], beneficial knowledge [that he discovered or propogated], and a righteous son who will pray for him."*** [Ibn Katheer, an-Nihaayah, 2/340]

The Soil of Paradise

al-Bukhaari and Muslim reported the hadith of al-Mi'raaj from Anas ibn Maalik from Abu Dharr in which Abu Dharr (ra) said, "The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"I entered Paradise where I saw lights of pearl and its soil was musk".*** Muslim and Ahmad report from Abu Sa'eed that Ibn Sayyaad asked the Messenger (saw) about the soil of Paradise. He said, ***"It is a fine white powder of pure musk".***

Ahmad reports from Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, concerning the Jews: ***"I am going to ask them about the soil of Paradise, which is a fine white powder."*** So he asked them, and they said, "It is like a loaf of bread, O Abul-Qaasim," The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Bread is like pearls".*** [an-Nihaayah, 2/242]

Ahmad at-Tirmidhi and ad-Daarimi reported that the Prophet (saw) said, "I asked "O Messenger of Allaah (saw), From what are people made?" He said, ***"From water."*** We asked, "From what is Paradise built?" He said, ***"Bricks of gold and silver and mortar of fragrant musk; its pebbles are pearls and rubies, and its soil is saffron. Whoever enters it is blessed with joy and will never be miserable; he will remain there forever and never die; his clothes will never wear out, and his youth will never fade away."*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/89, no. 5630]

Footnotes

(1) Ibn Hajar said, in Taqreed al-Tahdhib, *"Na'eem ibn Hammar or Hibaar or Khammaar. He was a Sahaabee and the majority of sources give his father's name as Himaar."*

The Rivers of Paradise

Allaah (swt), may He be Blessed and Exalted, has told us that rivers flow from beneath Paradise:

"And give glad tidings to those who believe and do righteous good deeds, that for them will be Gardens under which rivers flow.." [2:25]

"For them will be Gardens of Eternity: beneath them rivers will flow" [18:31]

The Prophet (saw) told us clearly about the rivers of Paradise. He said that during his Israa' (Night Journey): ***"...I saw four rivers flowing out from beneath Sidrat al-Muntahaa, two visible and two hidden. He asked, "O Jibreel, What are these rivers?" He said, "The two hidden rivers are rivers of Paradise, and the two visible rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates".*** [Muslim, Kitaab al-Imaan, Baab al-Israa', 1/150, no. 164; al-Bukhaari reports the same from Anas ibn Maalik, Jaami' al-Usool, 10/507, narrated bt Abu Awanah, al-Isma'eelee and at-Tabaranee in as-Sagheer]

Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Sihran, Jihran, the Euphrates and the Nile are all from the rivers of Paradise"***. [Sahih Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab ma fid-dunyaa min anhaar al-jannah, 4/2183, no. 2839, al-Albaani attributed it, in Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah 1/6, to Muslim, Ahmad, al-Ajirri and al-Khateeb]

Sheikh Naasir ud-Deen al-Albaani said, "*Perhaps what is meant is that these rivers originated in Paradise just as mankind did; this hadith does not contradict the well-established fact that these rivers spring forth from known sources on earth. If this is not in fact the meaning of this hadith, then it is one of the matters of al-Ghayb [the Unseen], which we must believe and accept because the Prophet (saw) has told us about it".* [Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 1/18]

al-Qaree' said, "*These four rivers are considered to be among the rivers of paradise because they are so fresh and beneficial, and contain blessings from Allaah, and were honoured by the fact that the Prophets came to them and drank from them".* [reported by al-Albaani in his footnotes on Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/80]

Another of the rivers of Paradise is al-Kawthar, which Allaah has given to His Messenger (saw): **"Verily We have granted you [O Muhammad] al-Kawthar [a river in Paradise]"** [108:1]

The Prophet (saw) saw it and told us about it. al-Bukhaari reported from Anas ibn Maalik that the Prophet (saw) said,

"Whilst I was walking in Paradise I saw a river whose banks were domes of hollow pearls, and I asked, "What is this, O Jibreel?" He said, "This is al-Kawthar which your Rabb has given to you". And its scent - or its mud - was of fragrant musk".

Hudbah [one of the narrators] was not sure if he said tib [scent] or teen [mud]. [Sahih al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab fil-Hawd, Fath al-Baari, 11/464]

Ibn 'Abbaas explained, *"al-Kawthar means the abundant blessings which Allaah has bestowed upon His Messenger (saw)."* Then Abu Bishr said to Sa'eed ibn Jaabir, who reported this comment from Ibn 'Abbaas, *"There are people who claim that it is a river in Paradise".* Sa'eed said, *"The river in Paradise is one of the blessings that Allaah has bestowed upon him"*. [Sahih al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab fil-Hawd, Fath al-Baari, 11/463]

al-Haafidh ibn Katheer compiled a number of hadith [an-Nihaayah, 2/246] in which the Prophet (saw) spoke about al-Kawthar, such as the report narrated by Muslim from Anas, which states that when the aayah **"Verily We have granted you al-Kawthar"** [108] was revealed, the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Do you know what al-Kawthar is?"*** They said, "Allaah and His Messenger know best". He said, ***"It is a river that Allaah (swt) has promised me and in it is much goodness".***

He also quoted the hadith narrated by Ahmad from Anas, according to which the Prophet (Saw) said, ***"I have been given al-Kawthar, which is a river flowing across the face of the earth; its banks are domes of pearl and it is not covered. I touched its mud with my hand, and found that it was fragrant musk and its pebbles were pearls".***

Also narrated by Ahmad from Anas, the Prophet (saw) said, ***"It is a river that Allaah (swt) has given to me in Paradise. Its mud is musk and its water is whiter than milk, and sweeter than honey. Birds with necks like the necks of camels drink from it."***

The rivers of Paradise do not just contain water. There are rivers of water, of milk, of wine and of clear honey.

Allaah (swt) says:

"The description of Paradise which the Muttaqoon have been promised is that in it are rivers of water the taste and smell of which are not changed; rivers of milk of which the taste never

changes; rivers of wine delicious to those who drink; and rivers of clarified honey [clear and pure].." [47:15]

at-Tirmidhi reports, with a sahih isnaad, from Haakim ibn Mu'aawiyah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"In Paradise there is a sea of honey, a sea of wine, a sea of milk and a sea of water, and the rivers flow out of these seas."*** [Jaami' al-Usool, 10/508]

He also told us of a river called Baariq, which flows by the gate of Paradise. During the period of al-Barzakh [the time between death and the day of Judgement] the shuhadaa are beside this river:

Ibn 'Abbaas narrated that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"The shuhadaa [martyrs] are in a green dome beside the river of Baariq, near the gate of Paradise, from which provision comes to them morning and evening."*** [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 3/235, no. 3636]

The Springs of Paradise

In Paradise there are many springs that provide drinks of different tastes:

"Truly al-Muttaqoon [the pious and righteous] will be amidst Gardens and Water-springs" [15:45]

"Verily al-Muttaqoon shall be amidst shades and springs." [77:41]

Concerning the two Gardens which Allaah (swt) has prepared for those who fear their Rabb, Allaah (swt) said, **"In them [both] will be two springs flowing [free].**" [55:50]

And concerning the two Gardens beneath them, He said, **"In them [both] will be two springs gushing forth water."** [55:66]

In Paradise there are two springs from which al-Muqarraboon will drink pure and undiluted, whilst the Abraar will drink their water mixed with something else. The first is the spring of Kafoor, as Allaah (swt) says:

"Verily the Abraar [the pious, those who fear Allaah and avoid evil], shall drink a cup [of wine] mixed with water from a spring in Paradise called Kafoor, A spring wherefrom the slaves of Allaah will drink, causing it to gush forth abundantly." [76:5-6]

He tells us that the pious will drink from it mixed with something else, whilst those close to Allaah will drink it pure and undiluted.

The second spring is of Tasneem, as Allaah (swt) says:

"Verily al-Abraar will be in delight [Paradise], On thrones, looking [at all things]. You will recognise in their faces the brightness of delight. They will b given to drink pure sealed wine, the last thereof [that wine] will be the smell of musk, and for this let [all] those who strive who want to strive [i.e. hasten earnestly to the obedience of Allaah]. It [that wine] will be mixed with Tasneem, a spring whereof drink those nearest to Allaah." [83:22-27]

Another of the springs of Paradise is called al-Salsabeel as Allaah (swt) says:

"And they will be given to drink there a cup [of wine] mixed with zanjabeel [ginger], a spring there, called Salsabeel". [76:17-18]

This is probably the same spring as that mentioned above, i.e. Kafoor.

The Palaces and Tents of Paradise

Allaah (swt) will build good and beautiful dwellings for the people of Paradise:

"and beautiful mansions in Gardens of everlasting bliss" [9:72]

In some places in the Qur'aan, Allaah (swt) described these dwellings as ghurafaat [chambers or dwellings]:

"and they will reside in the high dwellings [Paradise] in peace and security." [34:37]

The reward for the slaves of the all-Merciful will be:

"Those will be rewarded with the highest place [in Paradise] because of their patience. Therein they shall be met with greetings and the word of peace and respect" [25:75]

Allaah (swt) described these Ghurafaat:

"But for those who fear Allaah and keep their duty to their Rabb [Allaah], for them are built lofty rooms, one above the other, under which rivers flow. [This is] the Promise of Allaah, and Allaah does not fail in [His] Promise." [39:20]

Ibn Katheer said: "Allaah has told us about His blessed slaves who will have rooms [or dwellings] in Paradise: these will be lofty palaces, "lofty rooms, one above another - story upon story, well-constructed, strong and decorated. The Prophet (saw) described these palaces to us. According to a hadith narrated by Ahmad, and Ibn Hibbaan from Abu Maalik al-Ash'ari and by at-Tirmidhi from 'Ali (ra) the Prophet (saw) said:

"In Paradise there are dwellings whose inside can be seen from the outside, and the outside can be seen from inside. Allaah [swt] has prepared them for those who feed the hungry, and speak softly and gently, fast continuously and pray at night whilst the people are asleep." [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 2/220, no. 2119]

Allaah (swt) has told us that there are tents or pavilions in Paradise:

"Houris [beautiful, fair females] restrained in pavilions" [55:72]

These pavilions are wondrous tents, made of pearls, each one is made from a single, hollowed-out pearl. They are sixty miles high; according to some reports they are sixty miles wide. al-Bukhaari reports from 'Abdullaah ibn Qays that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"The tent is a hollowed out pearl, thirty miles high; in each corner of it the believer will have a wife whom no one else can see".*** Abu 'Abdus-Samad and al-Haarith reported from Abu 'Imraan that the wording was ***"sixty miles high"*** [Sahih al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Bid' al-Khalq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah, Fath al-Baari, 6/318]

Muslim reported from 'Abdullaah ibn Qays that the Prophet (saw) said:

"The believer in Paradise will have a tent made out of a single, hollowed-out pearl, sixty miles long, in which he will have [a number of] wives, whom he will visit in turn, none of whom will see the others". [see also Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab fi Sifaat Khiyaam al-Jannah, 4/2182, no. 2838]

The Prophet (saw) told us about the characteristics of the palaces of some of his wives and companions. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report that Abu Hurayrah (ra) said, "Jibreel came to the Prophet (saw) said, ***"O Messenger of Allaah, Khadeejah is coming, carrying a container of food. When she comes to you, convey to her greetings of peace from her Rabb and from me, and give her the glad tidings of a house in Paradise made of brocade, in which there is no noise or exhaustion.""*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/266]

al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Jaabir that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"I entered Paradise, where I saw ar-Rumaysa', the wife of Abu Talhah. And I heard footsteps and asked, "Who is that?" He [Jibreel] said, "That is Bilaal." And I saw a palace with women in its courtyard. I asked, "Whose is this?" They said, "It is for 'Umar ibn al-Khattab". I had wanted to go in and look at it, but I remembered your jealousy [where women are concerned]."*** 'Umar said, *"May my mother and father be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allaah (saw), would I feel jealous from you?"* [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/226]

The Prophet (saw) has told us of the way in which the believer may acquire more than one house in Paradise:

Ahmad reports with a saheeh isnaad from Ibn 'Abbaas that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Whoever builds a masjid for Allaah, even if it is as small as the nestling-place scratched out by the sane grouse for its eggs, Allaah (swt) will build a house for him in Paradise".*** [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 5/265, no. 6005]

Ahmad, al-Bukhaari, Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah report from 'Uthmaan that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said ***"Whoever builds a mosque for Allaah (swt), Allaah (swt) will build something similar for him in Paradise".*** [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 5/265, no. 6007]

Muslim, Abu Dawud, Ahmad, an-Nasaa'ee, and Ibn Maajah report from Umm Habeebah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Whoever prays twelve extra [supererogatory] rak'ahs every day, Allaah (swt) will build for him a house in Paradise.***" [Saheeh al-Jaami', 5/316, no. 6234]

The Light of Paradise

al-Qurtubee said, "*The scholars said there is no night and day in Paradise, rather they will be in eternal everlasting light. They will know when night comes because curtains or screens will be put up and doors will be closed, and they will know when day comes because the curtains or screens will be taken down and the doors will be opened. This was mentioned by Abul-Faraj ibn al-Jawzee"* [al-Qurtubee, at-Tadhkirah, p. 504]

Ibn Katheer in his commentary on the aayah: **"And they will have therein their sustenance, morning and evening. Such is the Paradise, which We shall give as an inheritance to those of Our slave who have been al-Muttaqoon [pious and righteous]"** [19:62-63] said, *"This means something approximate to the times of day and night, it does not mean that there will be a day and night there. They will know the passing of time by the changes in the light*" [Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/471]

On the same subject, Ibn Taymiyyah said, *"There is no sun and moon in Paradise, and no day or night, but they will know morning and evening from a light that shines from the direction of the Throne"* [Majmu' Fataawa Shaikh al-Islaam, 4/312]

The Fragrance of Paradise

Paradise is filled with a pure and beautiful fragrance, which the believers will be able to discern from a great distance. Ahmad, an-Nasaa'ee, Ibn Maajah and al-Haakim report with a saheeh isnaad that the Messenger (saw) said, ***"Whoever kills a man of Ahl ad-Dhimmah [non-Muslims living under Islaamic rule] will not smell the fragrance of Paradise, even though its fragrance can be discerned from a distance of forty years' travelling."*** [Saheeh al-Jaami as-Sagheer, 5/235, no. 6324 adn 5/337 no. 6333]

The Trees and Fruits of Paradise

(i) Its trees and fruits are of many kinds and everlasting

The trees of Paradise are abundant and good and of many kinds. Allaah has told us that there are grapevines, datepalms and pomegranate trees in Paradise, as well as lotus trees and acacia trees:

"Verily, for the muttaqoon, there will be a success [Paradise], gardens and grape yards" [78:31-32]

"in them [both will be fruits, date palms and pomegranates" [55:68]

"And those on the Right Hand - who will be those on the Right Hand? [They will be] among thornless lote-trees, Among Talh trees with fruits piled one above another, In shade long-extended, By water flowing constantly, And fruit in plenty" [56:27-32]

The lotus tree [ad-Sidr] is a thorny plant, but in Paradise it will be thornless. at-Talh [acacia tree] is a tree of Hijaaz, a kind of 'idah [a fair sized thorny shrub], but in Paradise its fruits will be ready to eat, with no effort required.

What Allaah (swt) has told us about the trees of Paradise is only a small part of what Paradise contains. Hence Allaah told us

"In them [both] will be every kind of fruit in pairs" [55:52]

Because of its abundance, people will be able to leave what they want and take what they want:

"...and therein they will call for fruits in abundance and drinks". [38:51]

"With fruits, any that they may select" [56:20]

"Verily the Muttaqoon shall be amidst shades and springs, And fruits - such as they desire" [77:41-42]

In short, Paradise contains all kinds of fruits and other joys that one's heart could desire:

"Trays of gold and cups will be passed round them, [there will be] therein all that one's soul could desire, all that the eyes could delight in, and you will abide therein forever" [43:71]

Ibn Katheer spoke very cleverly about the greatness of the fruits of Paradise, and concluded that by means of understatement, Allaah (swt) conveyed the abundance and greatness of those fruits. He said, *"The lotus tree [as-Sidr] does not bear any fruit other than some insignificant, inferior fruits, and it is thorny. The acacia tree [at-Talh] is only used for shade in this world [not for fruit] but in Paradise there will be many of them,*

growing beautifully, and bearing such abundant fruit that a single fruit will have seventy kinds of taste and colour that resemble one another.

So how do you think the trees that are grown for their fruit on earth will be in Paradise, like apple trees, date palms, grape vines and so on? How do you think the flowers will be? In short, there will be what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart can comprehend and we ask Allaah (swt) to grant us some of this, by His Grace" [an-Nihaayah, 2/262]

The trees of Paradise bear fruit constantly, unlike the trees of this world, which bear fruit only at certain times or seasons. The trees of Paradise always bear fruit and offer shade:

"The description of the Paradise which the Muttaqoon have been promised! -Underneath it rivers flow, its provision is eternal and so is its shade" [13:55]

"And fruit in plenty, whose season is not limited, and their supply will not be cut off" [56:32-33]

The supply is continuous and the people of Paradise are never denied. one of the delights that the people of Paradise will enjoy is finding that its fruits are similar in appearance, but different in taste:

"Everytime they will be provided with a fruit therefrom, they will say, "This is what we were provided with before", and they will be given things in resemblance [i.e. in the same form but different in taste]" [2:25]

The trees of Paradise are of rich and lush foliage - **"With spreading branches"** [55:48], and they are intensely green - **"dark and green [in colour]"** [55:64]. The intensity of the colour is because of the density of the trees in Paradise.

The fruits of the trees will be low-hanging, in easy reach of the people of Paradise:

"Reclining upon the couches lined with silk brocade, and the fruits of the two Gardens will be near at hand" [55:54]

The shade of these trees will be as Allaah (swt) says:

"..and We shall admit them to shades wide and ever deepening". [4:57]

"In shade long-extended" [56:30]

(ii) Some of the trees of Paradise

The Messenger of Allaah (saw) told us wondrous things about some of the trees of paradise which indicates that they are so amazingly huge that trying to imagine them makes one's head spin. We shall quote some examples here:

<u>(a) A tree whose shadow it takes one hundred years to cross.</u>

This is a huge tree, whose true size is known only to its Creator. The Prophet (saw) conveyed an impression of its size when he said that ***"In Paradise there is a tree which the rider of a swift horse would need one hundred years to pass beneath"*** [al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab Sifaat al-Jannah, Fath al-Baari,

11/416; Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab inna fil-Jannah Shajarah, 2/2176, no. 2828, from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri; see also al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Bid' al-Khalq, Baab ma jaa'a fi Sifaat al-Jannah, Fath al-Baari, 6/319]

And in the narration of Muslim from Abu Hurayrah and Sahl ibn Sa'd it is said that ***"In Paradise there is a tree under whose shade a traveller could travel for one hundred years and not reach the edge of it"*** [Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab in fil-Jannah Shajarah Yaseer al-Raakib fi dhiliha mi'ah 'aam, hadith no 2826, 2827]

(b) Sidrat al-Muntaha

There is a tree in paradise which Allaah has mentioned in a clear and unambiguous revelation. Allaah (swt) told us that our Prophet Muhammad (saw) saw Jibreel in the form in which Allaah created him at that tree. He also told us that it was veiled with something known only to Allaah (swt) when the Prophet (saw) saw it:

"And indeed he [Muhammad] saw him [Jibreel] at a second descent [i.e. a second time] near Sidrat al-Muntaha [the Lote-tree of the utmost boundary beyond which none may pass] near it is the Paradise of Abode. When that covered the lote-tree which covered it! The sight of [Muhammad] turned not aside [right or left], nor did it transgress beyond [the] limit [ordained for it]" [53:13-18]

The Prophet (saw) told us about what he saw of this tree:

"Then I was taken up until I reached Sidrat al-Muntaha and I saw its Nabq [fruits] which looked like the clay jugs of Hajar, its leaves were like the ears of elephants, and one of these leaves could cover the whole of this ummah. It was veiled in colours indescribable. Then I entered Paradise, and its lights were pearls and its soil was musk". [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 4/82, no. 4075, al-Bukhaari and Muslim; see also al-Bukhaari, Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi and Muslim, Saheeh al-Jaami', 3/18, no. 2861]

(c) Tooba.

This is a huge tree which produces the fabric for the clothing of the people of Paradise. Ahmad Ibn Jareer and Ibn Hibbaan report from Abu Sa'eed

al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Tooba is a tree in Paradise, as big as a hundred year's journey; the clothes of the people of Paradise comes from its calyces [the outer parts of its flowers]"*** [Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 4/639, no. 1985, the isnaad is hasan]

Narrated by Ahmad from 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr, who said, "A man came to the Prophet (saw) and asked, "O Messenger of Allaah, tell us about the clothes of the people of Paradise; are they created or are they woven?" Some of the people laughed. The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "***Why are you laughing? Because someone who does not know has asked someone who does know?***" Then he turned and asked, "Where is the one who asked the question?" The man said, "Here I am, O Messenger of Allaah". He said, ***"No, they are produced by the fruits of Paradise"*** three times" [Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 4/640]

(iii) The best aromatic plants in Paradise

Allaah told us that in Paradise there are aromatic plants:

"[there is for him] rest and provision [Rayhaan - literally - sweet smelling plants, here used as symbolical of complete satisfaction and delight]" [56:89]

In Mu'jam at-Tabaraanee al-Kabeer, a report from 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr whose isnaad is saheeh according to the conditions of al-Bukhaari and Muslim states that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The best of the aromatic plants of Paradise is henna."*** [SilSilah as-Saheehah, 3/407, no. 1420]

(iv) The trunks of the trees of Paradise are of Gold

One of the wondrous things that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) told us is that the trunks of the trees are gold:

"There is no tree in Paradise that does not have a trunk made of gold" [Ibn Hibbaan, at-Tirmidhi, al-Bayhaqee, from Abu Hurayrah, Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer 5/150 saheeh]

(v) How can the Believer increase his share of the trees of Paradise?

al-Khaleel ar-Rahmaan and the Father of the Prophets, Ibraaheem (as) asked our Prophet Muhammad (saw) on the night of the Israa' to convey his greetings to this ummah and to tell them the way in which they could increase their share of the trees of Paradise. at-Tirmidhi reported with a hasan isnaad from Ibn Mas'oud that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"I met Ibraaheem...and he said, "O Muhammad, tell your ummah that Paradise is a a land whose soil is good and its water is sweet. It is an empty plain, which will be planted with SubhaanAllaah, al-Hamdulillaah, and Allaahu Akbar" [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 5/34, no. 5028]

The Animals and Birds of Paradise

The kinds of birds and animals that exist in Paradise are known only to Allaah. He ta'ala told us that among the delights enjoyed by the people of Paradise will be:

"..and the flesh of fowls any that they may desire" [56:21]

at-Tirmidhi reports from Anas that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) was asked, "What is al-Kawthar?" He said, ***"That is a river that Allaah has given me... and in it are birds with necks like the necks of camels".*** 'Umar said, These birds will be in bliss". The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Those who eat them will be more blissful""***. [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/91]

al-Haakim and Abu Na'eem reported from Ibn Mas'oud that "a man brought a haltered she-camel and said, "O Messenger of Allaah, this she-camel is for the sake of Allaah". He said, ***"You will have seven hundred haltered she-camels in Paradise***" [Silsilat as-Saheehah, 2/228 no. 634; a similar report is narrated by Muslim, Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 2/350, 3799]

The People of Paradise:
The Deeds for Which People Will Deserve to Enter Paradise

The people of Paradise are the believers and strict monotheists. All those who associate others with Allaah or disbelieve in Him, or deny any of the principles of faith will not be allowed to enter Paradise. Their destination will be Hellfire.

The Qur'aan often states that the people of Paradise are the believers who do righteous deeds, to quote one of many examples:

"But whoever comes to Him as a believer [in tawheed] and has done righteous good deeds, for such are the high ranks [in the Hereafter] - 'Adn [Eden] Paradise [everlasting gardens [under which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever: such is the reward of those who purify themselves". [20:75-76]

- Believers may earn Paradise through their eemaan and Islaam:

"My worshippers! No fear shall be on you this Day, nor shall you grieve - [you] who believed in Our aayaat and were Muslims, enter Paradise you and your wives in happiness" [43:68-70]

- Or because they were sincere in their devotion to Allaah:

"Save the chosen slaves of Allaah [al-Mukhliseen]. For them there will be a known provision, fruits and they shall be honoured, in the gardens of delight." [37:40-43]

- Or for the strength of their relationship with Allaah, their longing for Him and worship of Him:

"Only those who believe in our aayaat who, when they are reminded of them fall down prostrate, and glorify the praises of their rabb, and they are not proud. Their sides forsake their beds, to invoke their Rabb in fear and hope, and they spend [charity in Allaah's Cause] our of what We have bestowed on them". [32:15-16]

- Or for their patience and reliance upon Allaah:

"..Excellent is the reward of the workers, those who are patient and put their trust [only] in their Rabb" [29:58-59]

- Or for their steadfastness in faith:

"Verily those who say "Our Rabb is Allaah" and remain firm [on that path], on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Such shall be the Companions of the Garden dwelling therein: a recompense for their good deeds". [46:13-14]

- Or for their humility:

"Verily those who believe and do righteous deeds and humble themselves [in repentance and obedience] before their Rabb - they will be dwellers of Paradise to dwell therein forever" [11:23]

- Or for their fear of Allaah:

"But for him who fears standing before his Rabb there will be two Gardens" [55:46]

- Or for their hatred of the kuffaar and mushrikeen and their refusal to befriend them:

"You will not find any people who believe in Allaah and the Last Day, making friendship with those who oppose Allaah and His messenger, even though they were their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred [people]. For such He has written Faith in their hearts, and strengthened them with Ruh [proof, light and guidance] from Himself. And We will admit them to Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein [forever]. Allaah is pleased with them and they with Him". [58:22]

Some aayaat discuss in detail the righteous deeds for which a person may deserve Paradise; for example, Surah ar-Ra'd states:

"But it is only the men of understanding who pay heed, those who fulfill the Covenant of Allaah and break not the mithaaq, those who join that which Allaah has commanded to be joined, [i.e. good to relatives and not severing the ties of kinship], fear their Rabb and dread the terrible reckoning, and those who remain patient, seeking their Rabb's Countenance, perform as-Salaat, and spend out of that which We have bestowed on them, secretly and openly, and defend evil with good, for such there is a good end 'Adn [Eden] Paradise which they shall enter and [also] those who acted righteously from among their fathers and their wives, and their offspring. And angels shall enter unto them from every gate [saying] Salaamun ''alaykum for that you persevered in patience! Excellent indeed is the final home!" [13:19-24]

And at the beginning of Surah al-Mu'minoon, Allaah explains that success is for the believers and then described the deeds that will qualify them for success:

"Successful indeed are the believers, those who offer their salaah with khushoo', and those who turn away from al-laghw [dirty, false, evil, vain talk, falsehood and all that Allaah has forbidden], and those who pay the zakah, and those who guard their chastity, except from their wives or those whom their right hands possess, for then, they are free from blame; but whoever seeks beyond that then those are the transgressors; those who are faithfully true to their amaanah [all duties that Allaah has ordained: honesty, moral responsibility, and trusts] and to their covenants and those who strictly guard their prayers [at the fixed times]. These are indeed the inheritors who shall inherit al-Firdaws. They shall dwell therein forever" [23:11]

The Prophet (saw) also said, ***"The people of Paradise are three: a ruler who is fair and just; a man who is compassionate and gentle towards every relative and Muslim; and a man with a large family who is proud and does not beg"*** [Muslim, see Sharh an-Nawawi 'alaa Muslim, 17/198]

The Way to Paradise is Very Hard

Paradise is very high, and ascending lofty places takes a great deal of effort. The way to Paradise is filled with things that go against human wishes and inclinations. This needs strong determination and willpower. In a hadith narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah (ra) the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said,

"Hell has been veiled with desires, and Paradise has been veiled with [surrounded by] hardships."

an-Nasaa'ee, at-Tirmidhi, and Abu Dawud report from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"When Allaah created Paradise, He told Jibreel, "Go look at it". So he went and looked at it, then he came back and said, "By Your Glory, no-one will hear of it but he will enter it". So He surrounded it with hardships and said, "Go and look at it". So he went and looked at it, then came back and said, "By Your Glory, I fear that no-one will enter it""***. [Jaami al-Usool, 10/520, 8068]

an-Nawawi commented on the first hadith:

"This is an example of the beautiful, eloquent and concise speech which the Prophet (saw) was capable, in which he gives a beautiful analogy. It means that nothing will help you to reach Paradise except going through hardships, and nothing will lead you to Hell, but whims and desires. Both are veiled as described, and whoever tears down the veil will reach what was hidden behind it. The veil of Paradise is torn down by going through hardships and the veil of Hell is torn down by giving in to whims and desires. Hardship including striving consistently and patiently in worship, restraining one's anger, forgiving, being patient, giving in charity, being kind to those who mistreat you, resisting physical desires, etc" [Sharh an-Nawawi 'ala Muslim, 17/165]

The People of Paradise Will Inherit The Portion of Paradise That Would Have Gone to the People of Hell

Allaah has given two positions to every descendent of Aadam: a position in Jannah and a position in Jahanam. Then whoever is destined to damnation of the kuffaar and mushrikeen will inherit the positions in Hell that had been allocated to the people of Paradise, and those of the people of Paradise for whom eternal bliss is decreed will inherit the portions of Paradise that had been allocated to the people of Hell. After describing the good deeds that would earn Paradise for the successful believers, Allaah said, "**These are indeed the inheritors, who shall inherit the Fridays"**

Ibn Katheer said in his commentary on this aayah: "Ibn Abi Haatim said - and he quoted to the isnaad going back to Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"There is no one among you who does not have two positions, one in Paradise and one in Hell. The believer will have a house built for him in Paradise, and his house in Hell will be demolished". A similar report was narrated from Sa'eed ibn Jubayr.

The believers will inherit the positions of the kuffaar, because those positions were created for those who worship Allaah (swt) alone and do not associate anything in worship with Him, because they did what they were commanded to do as far as worship is concerned, whilst the kuffaar neglected the duty for which they had been created. So the believers gained the share that the kuffaar would have gained if they had obeyed Allaah (swt) and they will gain even more than that. Muslim reported from Abu Burdah from Abu Musaa that the Prophet (saw) said: ***"Some people amongst the Muslims will come on the Day of Resurrection with sins as great as a mountain. Allaah will forgive them, and will pass [the burden of sin] to the Jews and Christians".*** According to another version of this hadith, the Prophet (saw) said, ***"When the Day of Judgement comes, Allaah (swt) will allocate a Jew or Christian for every Muslim and will say, "This is your ransom from the Fire".*** This hadith reflects the words of Allaah (swt):

"Such is the Paradise which We shall give as an inheritance to those of Our slaves who have been al-Muttaqoon" [19:63] and

"This is the Paradise which you have been made to inherit because of your deeds which you used to do [in the life of this world]" [43:72] [Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 5/10]

The Weak and Destitute Will Form the Majority in Paradise

Most of those who will enter Paradise will be the weak and destitute, whom people tend to ignore and care little about, but in the sight of Allaah (swt) they are important, becuse they fear Him and worship Him faithfully and with humility. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Hareethah ibn Wahb that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said:

"Shall I not tell you about the people of Paradise? They said, "Of course". He said, "Every weak and oppressed person; if he were to implore Allaah for anything, He would grant it to him." [Jaami' al-Usool, 10/535]

An-Nawawi said, commenting on this hadith: *"It refers to those who others despise, scorn and oppress because of their weak position in this world. What is meant is that most of the people of Paradise will be of this type, but it does not meant that all of them will be".* [Sharh an-Nawawi alaa Muslim, 17/187]

al-Bukhaari, Ahmad and Muslim reported from Usaamah ibn Zayd that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"I stood at the gate of Paradise and saw that most of those who entered were the poor and destitute. The people of means were held back, whilst the people of Hell had been ordered into the Fire. I stood by the gate of Hell, and saw that most of those who entered it were women".*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabih, 2/663 no 5233]

Will There Be More Men or Women in Paradise?

Men and women engaged in this dispute when the Sahaabah were still alive. Muslim reports from Ibn Sireen:

"Men and women disputed as to which of them would form the majority in Paradise. According to another report, either they were competing, or they were discussing, whether there would be more men or women in Paradise. They consulted Abu Hurayrah, who said that women would form the majority, on the basis of the words of the Prophet (saw):

"The first group to enter Paradise will be as beautiful as the full moon, and the group that follows them will be like the brightest shining stars in the sky: each man of them will have two wives, the marrow of whose leg-bones will be visible through the flesh because of their extreme beauty. There will be no one who is unmarried in Paradise"" [Sahih Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab awwal zumrah tadhkul al-Jannah, 4/2179, hadith no. 2834]

This hadith clearly indicates that there will be more women than men in Paradise. Some others though that there would be more men, because of the hadith, "I saw that they [women] formed the majority of the people of Hell". The response to this is the fact that women will form the majority of the inhabitants of Hell does not necessarily mean that they will be a minority in Paradise, as Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalaani said [Fath al-Baari 6/325]

The two hadiths may be reconciled by stating that women will be in the majority in both Paradise and Hell, just as there are more women than men in this world. We could say that the hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah indicates that the total number of women in paradise, including women of this world and al-Hoor al-'Eeyn will outnumber men. The question then is, who will be greater in number in Paradise: the men of this world or the women? al-Qurtubee reconciled between these two hadiths by suggesting that women will form the majority of the inhabitants of Hell before the Shafaa'ah [intercession], when the sinners from amongst the muwwahideen will be brought out of Hell. Thereafter women will form the majority of the people of Paradise. [at-Tadhkirah, al-Qurtubee, p. 475]

The small number of women in Paradise is indicated in a report narrated by Ahmad and Abu Ya'laa from 'Amr ibn al-'Aas who said, "Whilst we were with the Messenger of Allaah (saw) on this mountain path, he said, "Look, can you see anything?" We said, *"We see crows, and one of them stands out because its beak and feet are red".* The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"No women will enter Paradise except those who are as rare among them as this crow is among the others""*** [Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 4/466, no. 1851]

Those Who Die Before the Age of Legal Capacity

(i) The Children of the Believers

The children of the Believers who die before reaching the age of puberty will be in Paradise, insha'Allaah, by the Grace and Mercy of Allaah. He (swt) says:

"And those who believe and whose offspring follow them in faith - to them shall We join their offspring, and We shall not decrease the reward of their deeds in anything. Every person is a pledge for that which he has earned" [52:21]

'Ali ibn Abi Taalib understood this aayah - **"Every person is a pledge for what he has earned"** [74:38] - to indicate that the children of the believers would be in Paradise, because they did not earn anything for which they would be considered a pledge. [at-Tadkhirah, p. 511]

al-Bukhaari included a chapter in his Saheeh entitled *"The virtue of one whose child dies and he bears it with patience for the sake of Allaah"*, in which he quoted the hadith of Anas who said that, ***"A Muslim whose three children die before reaching the age of puberty will be admitted to Paradise by Allaah out of Mercy towards them."***

According to a hadith narrated by Abu Sa'eed the women asked the Prophet (Saw) "Set aside a day for us". So he preached to them and said, ***"Any woman whose three children die will be shielded from the Fire by them."*** A woman asked, "What about two?" He said, ***"And if two [die]."*** [Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab al-Janaa'iz, Baab fadl man mata lahu walad fa ahtasaba, Fath al-Baari, 3/118]

According to a hadith narrated by al-Baraa' (saw), "When [the Prophet's son] Ibraaheem, died, the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"There is a wet nurse for him in Paradise"".*** [Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab al-Janaa'iz, Baab ma qila fi awlaad al-Muslimeen, Fath al-Baari, 3/244]

The conclusion that may be drawn from this hadith is that the children of the believers will be in Paradise as Ibn Hajar says, "*The one who is the reason for his parents being shielded from the Fire should be protected himself, because he is the means and cause of mercy".* [Fath al-Baari, 3/244]

A number of reports clearly indicate this for example, ***"The Muslims and the children will be in Paradise"*** [narrated by 'Ali, quoted by 'Abdullaah ibn Ahmad in Ziyaadat al-Musnad]

"A Muslim couple whose three children die before reaching the age of puberty will be admitted by Allaah to paradise, they and their children, by His Grace and Mercy" [Fath al-Baari, 2/245]

From Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"Their little ones are the pageboys of Paradise. One of them will meet his father - or his parents - and take hold of his clothes - or his hand - just as I am taking hold of the hem of your garment, and he will not let go" Or he said," And he will not let go until Allaah admits him to Paradise."*** [Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 1/184, no. 342]

"The children of the believers will be in Paradise, being cared for by Ibraaheem and Sarah until they give them back to their parents on the Day of Resurrection". [narrated by Abu Na'eem, ad-Daylami and Ibn 'Asaakir from Abu Hurayrah - Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 3/451 no. 1467; see also 2/156 no. 603 narrated by Ahmad, Ibn Hibbaan, al-Haakim]

an-Nawawi referred to the ijmaa'' of reliable Muslim scholars that any Muslim child who dies will be in Paradise. [Fath al-Baari, 3/244]. al-Qurtubee stated that Hammaad ibn Zayd, Hammad ibn Salamah and Ishaaq ibn Rahawayh refrained from giving an opinion [at-Tadhkirah, p.511]. an-Nawawi said, "Some of them refrained from giving an opinion because of the hadith of 'Aaishah which was reported by Muslim with the wording, "A boy of the Ansaar died, and I said, *"It is good for him, because he did not do or know any evil".* The Prophet (saw) said, "***You should not say that because Allaah (swt) has created its own people for Paradise.."*** The response to that is that he was most likely rebuking her for hastening to say something so decisive with no proof, or else he said that before he knew that the children of the Muslims would be in Paradise." [Fath al-Baari, 3/244].

I suggest that the best opinion is that this hadith indicates that it is not permitted to state definitely that any one particular person is one of the people of Paradise, even if we know that in general they will be in Paradise.

The second point is that we should not be hasty in such matters, so that people will not dare to do what happens so often nowadays, when the bereaved claim that their departed loved one is in Paradise, even though he was the worst of people. Ibn Taymiyyah said, *"We should not say every single child of the believers that he is in Paradise, but we accept that this is the case in general."* [Majmu' Fataawa Shaykh al-Islaam, 4/281]

(ii) The Children of the Mushrikeen

The Messenger of Allaah (saw) was asked about the children of the Mushrikeen and he said, ***"Allaah who created them knows best what they would have done".*** [on the authority of Ibn 'Abbaas, Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab al-Janaa'iz, Baab ma qilaa fi awlaad al-Mushrikeen, Fath al-Baari, 3/246]

Abu Hurayrah (ra) reported that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Every child is born in a state of fitrah [the natural state of man] and his parents make him a Jew or a Christian, or a Magian, just as an animal produces a perfect baby animal: do you find it mutilated?"*** [Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab al-Janaa'iz, Baab ma qilaa fi awlaad al-Mushrikeen, Fath al-Baari, 3/246]

As Ibn Hajar said, "al-Bukhaari may Allaah have mercy on him, indicated that he was refraining from giving an opinion on the children of the mushrikeen.

Later in his Saheeh, in the tafseer of Surat ar-Rum, he indicates that he favoured the suggestion that they are in Paradise. He also organised the hadith in this chapter in such a way that shows this was his favoured opinion. He starts with a hadith which indicates that we cannot say one way or the other, then quotes a hadith which indicates that they are in Paradise, and follows that with a hadith that clearly states that this is the case:

"As for the children around him, they are the children of mankind." In another version, "As for the two children around him, every child is born in a state of fitrah." Some of the Muslims asked, "Even the children of the Mushrikeen?" He said, "Even the children of the mushrikeen"

Ibn Hajar said, "This is supported by the hadith of Anas reported by Abu Ya'la, in which the Prophet (saw) said, "***I asked my Rabb for the laheen [those who play or those who are unaware] of the children of mankind, that they would not be punished, and that was granted to me."*** [its isnaad is hasan] Laheen was explained as meaning children, because of the hadith of ibn 'Abbaas nrarted by al-Bazzar. Ahmad reported from al-Khansaa bint Mu'aawiyah ibn Suraym from her paternal aunt who said, "I said, "O Messenger of Allaah, who is in Paradise?" He said, ***"Prophets are in Paradise, martyrs are in Paradise and newborn babies are in Paradise".*** Its isnaad is hasan. [Fath al-Baari, 3/246]

They also took as evidence the hadith, ***"The children of the mushrikeen are servants of the people of Paradise"*** [Ibn Mandah in al-Ma'rifah, Abu Na'eem in al-Hilyah, Abu Ya'la in al-Musnad and al-Albaani deemed it saheeh by the sum of its isnaad, Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 3/452, no. 1468]

The idea that they are in Paradise is the opinion of some scholars, such as favoured by Abul-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzee [Majmu' Fataawa, 24/382, 4/303] an-Nawawi said of this opinion, "This is the correct position favoured by those who study the words of Allaah,

"..And We never punish until We have sent a Messenger [to give warning]" [17:15]" [Fath al-Baari, 3/247]

al-Qurtubee also considered this the most likely t be corrected, reconciling the apparently conflicting reports by saying that the Prophet (saw) initially said they would be in Hell with their parents, then he refrained from passing any judgement and said "Allaah knows best what they would have done", then it was revealed to him that no one would be punished for the sins of another [17:15] so he stated that the would be in Paradise [at-Tadhkirah, p.515]. The trouble with this way of reconciliation, as Ibn Hajar said, is that this is not a matter that can be subjected to study and examination. It is a matter of al-Ghayb, which can only be known through revelation. And Allaah knows best.

Some scholars such as Hammaad ibn Zayd, Hammaad ibn Salamah, Ibn al-Mubaarak and Ishaaq, say that they are subject to the will of Allaah. It was also transmitted by al-Bayhaqee in al-I'tiqaad from ash-Shaaf'iee. Ibn 'Abdul-Barr said "This might be the opinion of Maalik, although there is no written evidence for that" [Majmu' Fatawah, 4/281-404, 24/372] and Abul-Hasan al-Ash'ari attributed this opinion to Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah, [Majmu' Fatawah, 24/372].

This is also the favoured view of Ibn Taymiyyah, who suggested that they will be tested of the day of Resurrection - *"The correct view is what was said concerning them, Allaah knows best what they would have done". We cannot say of any particular individual that he will be in Paradise or Hell. A number of hadiths state that on the Day of Resurrection they will be tested in the arena of judgement: they will be given commands and prohibitions and those who obey will enter Paradise, whilst those who disobey will be sent to Hell."* He attributed this to Imaam Ahmad and Abul-Hasan al-Ash'ari who attributed it to Ahlus-Sunnah [Majmu' Fataawa, 24/372, 4/303, 4/281].

Ibn Hajar also stated that they would be tested in the Hereafter by being shown the Fire: whoever enters it will find it cool and safe, but whoever refuses to enter it will be punished. Ahadeeth to this effect were reported by al-Bazzar from Anas and Abu Sa'eed and by at-Tabaraani from Mu'aadh ibn Jabal. It has been proven through saheeh asaanid that the insane and those who lived between the time of Jesus (as) and Muhammad (saw) will also be tested in the Hereafter. al-Bayhaqee stated in al-I'tiqaad that this is the correct opinion. [Fath al-Baari 3/246].

The soundness of this opinion is indicated by the clear unambiguous aayaat of the Qur'aan which tells the story of the righteous slave whom Musa (as) travelled to meet at the junction of the two seas. Explaining the reason why he killed the boy he said,

"And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared lest he should oppress them by rebellion and disbelief" [18:80].

Muslim reports from Ibn 'Abbaas (ra) "The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, concerning the boy was killed by al-Khidr, ***"He was decreed from the beginning to be a kaafir and if he had been left, he would have oppressed his parents with his rebellion and disbelief."*** Commenting on this hadith, Ibn Taymiyyah said *"It means that Allaah decreed it in Umm al-Kitaab [the Register Book in Jannah] i.e. it was written that he would be a kaafir and if he had lived he would have been a kaafir indeed."*

al-Qurtubee said, in at-Tadhkirah [p.514]: "What makes this idea [that they will be tested in the Hereafter] weak is the fact that the Hereafter is not the place of testing; it is the place of recompense - reward of punishment. al-Hulaymee said "This hadith is not proven to be sound, and it contradicts the basic beliefs of the Muslims, because the Hereafter is not the place of testing. Everyone will inevitably know about Allaah, and there is no test when a thing is inevitable."

This is incorrect and was refuted by Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah who said, "Responsibility only ceases when one enters the abode of recompense, which is either Paradise or Hell. In the arena of judgement they will be tested just as they are tested in al-Barzakh. The individual will be asked, ***"Who is your Rabb? What is your deen? Who is your Prophet?"*** Allaah (swt) says, **"[Remember] the Day when the Shin shall be laid bare and they shall be called to prostrate to Allaah but they [hypocrites] will not be able to do so"** [68:42]..." [Majmu' Fataawa, 24/ 372]

Testing will only cease when a person enters Paradise or Hell. al-Qurtubee's suggestion that everyone will inevitably know Allaah on that Day is correct, but the testing will take the form of orders and prohibitions as is reported in a number of texts. Allaah (swt) will test them by ordering them to enter the Fire: whoever obeys will be blessed, whilst whoever disobeyed will be doomed.

The People of Paradise:
The Number of People from This Ummah Who Will Enter Paradise

Many people from this ummah will enter Paradise, but only Allaah knows their exact number. al-Bukhaari reports from Sa'eed ibn Jubayr who said, "Ibn 'Abbaas told me that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"I was shown the nations, and I saw a Prophet passing by with his ummah, another with a band of followers, another with ten followers, another with five, and another who was alone. I looked and saw a huge crowd of people, and I asked, "O Jibreel, are these my ummah?" He said, "No look at the horizon." I looked and saw a vast multitude. He said,"These are your ummah, and the seventy thousand in front will not be brought to account or be punished."*** [al-Bukhaari, Kitaab ar-Riqaaq, Baab Yadhkul al-Jannah Sab'oona Alfaan, Fath al-Baari, 11/406]

The first crowd which the Prophet (Saw) thought was his ummah was in fact the Children of Israel as is stated in a number of saheeh reports, ***"I hoped that this would be my ummah, but I was told that this was Musa and his people."*** [Fath al-Baari, 11/407].

Concerning the words "a vast multitude" Ibn Hajar said, "A report from Sa'eed ibn Mansoor says, "huge" [Adheem] and adds, ***"It was said to me, "look at the horizon" So I looked and I saw a huge multitude. Then I was told, "Look at the other horizon, it is just like the first one."" According to a report given by Ibn Faadil, "[I saw] a multitude that filled the horizon and it was said to me "Look here and here, all across the horizon". According to a version narrated by Ahmad, "I saw my ummah filling the plains and the mountains, and I was amazed at the numbers and their appearance. I was asked, "Are you pleased O Muhammad?" and I said, "Yes O Rabb.""*** [Fath al-Baari, 11/408]

Some hadiths state that along with every thousand of the seventy thousand will be another seventy thousand plus three handfuls added by Allaah.

Our Prophet (saw) hoped that this ummah would constitute half of the population of Paradise. In a hadith whose authenticity is agreed upon, Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri said that when the Messenger of Allaah (saw) was speaking about who would be sent to hell, he said, ***"By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, I hope that you will be half of the people of Paradise. Among the people you are no more than a black hair on the hide of a white bull.."*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/8]

Some hadith state that this ummah will constitute two thirds of the population of Paradise. at-Tirmidhi reports with a hasan isnaad and ad-Daarimee and al-Bayhaqee also report, from Buraydah, that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"The people of Paradise are one hundred and twenty ranks, eight from this ummah and forth from the rest of the nations."*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/92, no. 5644]

Muslim reports from Anas (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"I will be the first intercessor in Paradise. No Prophet was believed in as I was believed in. Among the Prophets is one who was believed in by only one man."*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/124, no. 5744].

The reason why so many people of this ummah believed is because of the great miracle of the Messenger of Allaah (saw), which was a recited revelation which is addressed to hearts and minds. It is a miracle that is preserved and will remain until the Day of Judgement. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said,

"There is no Prophet who was not given a sign [or miracle] in which people believed and followed him. That which I have been given is a Revelation from Allaah and I hope that I will have the greatest number of followers on the Day of Resurrection." [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/142, 5746]

The Leaders of the People of Paradise

(i) The Leaders of the Men

A number of the Sahaabah, including 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib, Anas ibn Maalik, Abu Hudhayfah, Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah, and Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri reported that the Messenger (saw) said, "***Abu Bakr and 'Umar will be the leaders of men of Paradise from the earlier and later generations."*** [Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 12/487, no. 824]

(ii) The Leaders of the Youth

at-Tirmidhi, al-Haakim, at-Tabaraani, Ahmad and others reported that Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri said, that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Hasan and Husayn are the leaders of the youth of Paradise"***. This is proven by so many reports that reach the level of tawatur. [see also the narration from Hudhayfah and from 'Abdullaah ibn 'Umar in Ibn 'Asaakir - Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, no. 797]

(iii) The Leaders of the Women

The true female leader is the one with whom her Rabb is pleased and whose deeds He accepts. The best women are those who attain the Paradise of delights. The women of Paradise are of different levels, and the Messenger (saw) told us about their leaders:

"The Messenger of Allaah (saw) drew four lines and said, "Do you know what these are?" They said, "Allaah and His Messenger know best." He said, ***"The best women of Paradise are Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid, Faatimah bint Muhammad, Maryam bint 'Imraan and Aasiyah bin Muzahim, the wife of Fir'awn"*** [Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 4/13, no. 1508, from Ahmad at-Tahhaawi, al-Haakim from Ibn 'Abbaas, saheeh]

Maryam and Khadeejah are the best of the four - ***"The best of its women is Maryam and the best of its women is Khadeejah"*** [from 'Ali in al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Manaaqib al-Ansaar, Fath al-Baari, 7/133] - and Maryam is the "First Lady" - "The leaders of the women of Paradise, AFTER Maryam bint 'Imraan will be.." [Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 3/410, no. 1424, from Jaabir in at-Tabaraani, saheeh]. The reason why Maryam is considered the best of all women is clearly stated in the Qur'aan:

"Behold! the angels said, "O Maryam! Allaah has chosen you and purified you, chosen you above the women of all nations." [3:42]

How could she not be the best of women when Allaah has clearly stated that,

"..her Rabb accepted her with a goodly acceptance. He made her to grow in a good manner". [3:37]

These four women are beautiful examples of perfect, righteous women. Maryam, the daughter of 'Imraan, is praised by Allaah in the Qur'aan:

"And Maryam, daughter of Imraan, who guarded her chastity; and We breather into [the sleeve of her shirt/garment] through Our Ruh [i.e. Jibreel] and she testified to the truth of the Words of her Rabb, and [also believed in] His Scriptures and she was one of the Qaaniteen [obedient to Allah]" [66:12]

Khadeejah as-Siddeeqah believed in the Messenger (saw) without hesitation; she consoled him and supported him in every way. Her Rabb gave her the good news, during her lifetime, of a place in Paradise in which there would be no noise or exhaustion [al-Bukhaari, Kitaab al-Manaaqib, Fath al-Baari, 7/133]

Aasiyah the wife of Fir'awn, despised the power and luxuries of this world and rejected Pharaoh and his false claims of divinity, so her husband tortured her until her soul departed to her Creator:

"And Allaah sets forth an example for those who believe, the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, "My Rabb! Build for me a home with You in Paradise, and save me from Pharaoh and his works, and save me from the Dhaalimoon [those that do wrong]" [66:11].

Faatimah az-Zahraa, the daughter of the Prophet (saw) was patient and forbearing, and feared Allaah. She was a branch from the pure tree, brought up by the educator of humanity.

The Ten Who Were Given Glad Tidings of Paradise

The Messenger (saw) clearly stated that ten of his Companions would be in Paradise:

"Abu Bakr will be in Paradise, 'Umar will be in Paradise, 'Uthmaan will be in Paradise, 'Ali will be in Paradise, Talhah will be in Paradise, az-Zubayr will be in Paradise, 'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn 'Awf will be in Paradise, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqaas will be in Paradise, Sa'eed ibn Zayd will be in Paradise and Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarraah will be in Paradise." [sahih, Ahmad from Sa'eed ibn Zayd, at-Tirmidhi from 'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn 'Awf, Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 1/70, no. 50]

"Ten will be in Paradise: the Prophet will be in Paradise. Abu Bakr will be in Paradise, 'Umar will be in Paradise, 'Uthmaan will be in Paradise, 'Ali will be in Paradise, Talhah will be in Paradise, az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwaam will be in Paradise, 'Sa'd ibn Maalik will be in Paradise, Abdur-Rahmaan ibn 'Awf will be in Paradise, and Sa'eed ibn Zayd will be in Paradise." [sahih, Ahmad, Abu Dawood, Ibn Maajah, ad-Diyaa, from Sa'eed ibn Zayd Saheeh al-Jaami as-Sagheer, 4/34, no. 3905]

The Books of the Sunnah tell us that one day the Prophet (saw) was sitting at the well of 'Arees, with Abu Musa al-Ash'ari acting as his gatekeeper. Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq came and asked permission to see him, and the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Let him in, and give him the glad tidings of Paradise"***. Then 'Umar came and he said, ***"Let him in and give him the glad tidings of Paradise".*** Then 'Uthmaan came and he said, ***"Let him in, and give him the glad tidings of Paradise because of an affliction that will befall him"*** [al-Bukhaari, Muslim and at-Tirmidhi. Jaami' al-Usool, 8/562, no. 6372]

Ibn 'Asaakir reported with a saheeh isnaad from Ibn Mas'oud that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"My successor will be in Paradise, his successor will be in Paradise, and the third and fourth will be in Paradise."*** [namely, the Khulafaa Rashida] [Saheeh al-Jaami as-Sagheer, 4/149, no. 4311]

at-Tirmidhi and al-Haakim reported with a saheeh isnaad from 'Aa'ishah that the Prophet (saw) said to Abu Bakr, "***You are free from the Fire."*** [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 2/24, no. 1494]

Others Who It Was Reported Will Be In Paradise

<u>Ja'far ibn Abi Taalib and Hamzah ibn 'Abdul-Muttaalib</u>

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said ***"I saw Ja'far ibn Abi Taalib flying like an angel with his two wings in Paradise"*** [at-Tirmidhi, Abu Ya'laa, al-Haakim and others, saheeh]

Ibn 'Abbaas narrated that the Prophet (saw) said ***"I entered Paradise yesterday and looked at it, and saw Ja'far flying with the angels, and I saw Hamzah reclining on a couch"*** [at-Tabaraani, Ibn 'Adiyy, al-Haakim, Saheeh al-Jaami', 3/140, no. 3358]

In a saheeh hadith the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The leader of the martyrs is Hamzah ibn 'Abdul-Muttaalib"*** [Saheeh al-Jaami', 3/219, no. 3569]

<u>Abdullaah ibn Salaam</u>

From Mu'aadh that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"'Abdullaah ibn Salaam is the tenth of the first ten to enter Paradise"*** [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 4/25, no. 3870, Ahmad, at-Tabaraani, al-Haakim]

<u>Zayd ibn Harithah</u>

ar-Rawayanee and ad-Diyaa reported from Buraydah that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"I entered Paradise and I was welcomed by a young girl. I asked, "Who do you belong to?" She said, "To Zayd ibn Harithah"*** [Saheeh al-Jaami as-Sagheer, 3/141, no. 3361]

<u>Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl</u>

From 'Aa'ishah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"I entered Paradise and I saw that Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl had two levels."*** [Saheeh al-Jaami as-Sagheer, 3/141, no. 3362. Ibn 'Asaakir]

This Zayd used to preach tawheed at the time of Jaahileeyyah; he was a Haneef, a follower of the way of Ibraaheem.

Harithah ibn al-Nu'maan

at-Tirmidhi and al-Haakim narrated from 'Aa'ishah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"I entered Paradise and I heard someone reciting. I asked, "Who is that?" They said, "Harithah ibn al-Nu'maan; this is the righteous man"*** [Saheeh al-Jaami as-Sagheer, 3/142, no. 3366]

Bilaal ibn Abi Rabah

at-Tabaraani and Ibn 'Adiyya report with a saheeh isnaad from Abu Umamah that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"I entered Paradise, and heard footsteps ahead of me. I asked, "What is this sound?" I was told, "This is Bilaal, walking in front of you""*** [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 3/142, no. 3364]

Ahmad reported with a saheeh isnaad from Ibn 'Abbaas that the Prophet (saw) said, "***I entered Paradise on the night of Israa' and I heard an indistinct sound from the side. I asked "What is this, O Jibreel?" He said, "Bilaal, the muadhin***" [Saheeh al-jaami' as-Sagheer, 3/142, no. 3367]

Abud-Dahdah

Muslim, Abu Dawood, at-Tirmidhi and Ahmad reported from Jaabir ibn Samurah that the Messenger (saw) said, "***How many bunches of dates are hanging for Abud-Dahdah is Paradise!"***

This is the one who gave his garden called Bayrahaa, the best garden in Madinah, in charity when he heard that Allaah (swt) had revealed,

"Who is he that will lend to Allaah a goodly loan so that He may multiply it to him many times?" [2:245]

Waraqah ibn Nawfal

al-Haakim reported with a saheeh isnaad from 'Aa'ishah that the Messenger (saw) said, ***"Do not slander Waraqah ibn Nawfal for I have seen that he will have one or two gardens in Paradise"*** [Saheeh al-Jaami as-Sagheer, 6/1534, no. 7197]

Waraqah believed in the Prophet (saw) when Khadeejah brought him to him at the beginning of his Call; he had asked Allaah to let him live until he saw His Messenger so that he could support him.

Paradise is Not the Equivalent of Deeds

Paradise is something of immense value; a person cannot earn it by virtue of his deeds alone - Muslim reported from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said,

"No one of you will enter Paradise by his deeds alone." They asked, "Not even you, O Messenger of Allaah?" He said, "Not even me, unless Allaah covers me with His Grace and Mercy" [Saheeh Muslim, 4/2170, no. 2816]

The fact that some texts indicate that Paradise is the equivalent reward for deeds could be problematic, for example:

"No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as reward for they used to do." [32:17].

However there is no conflict between these aayaat and the meaning of the hadith. The
aayaat indicate that good deeds will be a reason, not the price, for admission to Paradise. The hadith say that good deeds are not the price.

Two groups were misled in this matter: The Jabaariyyah, who took the hadith to mean that the reward is not connected to deeds, because man has nothing to do with deeds [i.e. everything is foreordained]; and the Qaadariyyah who took the hadith to mean that Paradise was the equivalent of good deeds, and man has the right to enter by virtue of his good deeds.

The commentator on at-Tahhaawiyyah said, "As for the idea that recompense results directly from one's deeds, the Jabaariyyah and the Qaadariyyah are misled, and Allaah has guided Ahl as-Sunnah. The ba' of negation [nafyi] is not like the ba' used for affirmation. The negation in the hadith ***"No one will enter Paradise by virtue of his deeds"*** [bi' amaalihi] is the ba' of substitution or exchange, as if good deeds were not the price of a man's admission to Paradise. This is like the [false] Mu'tazili claim that good deeds will give a person the right to enter Paradise, whereas the truth is that admission to Paradise is by the Grace and Mercy of Allaah. The bi' in the aayah **"a reward for what they used to do [jazaa'an bi maa kanoo ya'maloon]"** [32:17] is known in Arabic grammar as the bi' of causation, i.e. because of their deeds. But Allaah is the Creator of Cause and Effect, so everything is referred back to His Grace and Mercy" [Sharh at-Tahhaawiyyah, 495]

Description of the People of Paradise and the Delights They Enjoy Therein

The people of Paradise will enter in the most perfect and beautiful form, in the image of their father, Aadam (as), for there is no human form more perfect and beautiful than that of Aadam, whom Allaah (swt) created very tall. He was as tall as a great palm tree, sixty cubits tall. Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said,

"Allaah, Subhaanahu wa ta'aala, created Aadam in his own image, sixty cubits tall... everyone who enters Paradise will be in the image of Aadam, sixty cubits tall. People kept getting shorter and shorter after the time of Aadam." [Saheeh Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab Yadkhul al-Jannah Aqwam Af'idatuhum mithl af'idatah at-Tayr 4:2183, no. 2841]

Their external appearance will be in harmony, and their hearts will be as one. Their hearts and souls will be clean and pure. Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) a hadith in which the Prophet describes people entering Paradise including a group whose light will be like the full moon. He (saw) said, "***Their form will be that of a single person, after the image of their father Aadam, sixty cubits tall."*** [Saheeh Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab Awwal zumrah yadkhuluna al-Jannah, 4/2179, no. 2834]

Another aspect of their beauty is that they will have no body hair, and will look as if their eyes are anointed with kohl. Each of them will enter Paradise aged thirty-three, the age of strength, vitality and youth. Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi report from Mu'aadh ibn Jabal that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "***The people of Paradise will enter Paradise hairless, looking as if their eyes are ringed with kohl, aged thirty three."*** [Saheeh al-Jaami' 6/337, no. 7928]

As reported in the hadith narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim, from Abu Hurayrah (ra), the people of Paradise ***"will not spit, blow their noses or excrete".***

The people of Paradise will not sleep. Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah and 'Abdullaah ibn Abi Awfaa reported that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"Sleep is the brother of death; the people of Paradise will not sleep"*** [Silsilat al-Hadith as-Saheehah, 3/74, no. 1087, al-Kaamil of Ibn 'Adiyy, al-Hilyah of Abu Na'eem, Taareekh Isbahaan, by Abul-Sheikh]

The Delights of the People of Paradise: The Superiority of Paradise Over the Pleasures of This World

The pleasures of this world are tangible and present, whilst the delights of Paradise are as-yet unseen promises. People are readily influenced by what they can see and know instantly; it is hard enough for them to forgo something that is in front of them for the sake of something else that is in the future, so how much harder it is if the promise will not be attained until after death! So Allaah (swt) drew a comparison between the pleasures of this world and the joys of Paradise, and explained that the delights of Paradise are far superior to this world's pleasures. The Qur'aan speaks at length denouncing this world of instant, fleeting pleasures and stating that the rewards with Allaah as far better, to encourage man to strive hard for success in the next world:

"And strain not your eyes in longing for the things We have given them for enjoyment to various groups of them [mushrikeen and kuffaar] the splendour of this life that We may test them thereby. But the provision [good reward in the Hereafter] of your Rabb is better and more lasting" [20:131]

And **"Beautified for men is the love of things they covet: women, children, much of gold and silver [wealth], branded beautiful horses, cattle and well-tilled land. This is the pleasure of the present world's life but Allaah has the excellent return with Him. Say: "Shall I inform you of things far better than those? For al-Muttaqoon there are Gardens with their Rabb, under which rivers flow. Therein [is their] eternal [home] and Azwaajun mutahharatun [purified mates or wives], and Allaah will be pleased with them. And Allaah is All-Seer of [His] Slaves**" [3:14-15]

There are many reasons why the delights of Paradise are superior to the pleasures of this dunyaa; Amongst them:

<u>(i) The Pleasures of this Dunyaa are Fleeting:</u>

"Say: Short is the enjoyment of this world. The Hereafter is [far] better for him who fears Allaah.." [4:77]

The Prophet (saw) illustrated the inferiority of this dunyaa by comparing it to what Allaah has prepared in Paradise, "***By Allaah, this world in comparison with the Hereafter is nothing more than as if one of you put his finger"*** - and he gestured with his forefinger - ***"in the sea; let him see how much water he would retrieve"*** [Saheeh Muslim, 4/2193, no. 2858]. A finger dipped in the ocean would not even pick up one drop; this is how little this world is worth when compared with the Aakhirah.

Because these pleasures are so insignificant, Allaah (swt) has rebuked those who prefer the pleasures of this world to the joys of the Aakhirah:

"O you who believe! What is the matter with you, that when you are asked to go forth in the Cause of Allaah [Jihaad] you cling heavily to this earth? Do you prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the Hereafter" [9:38]

We have already quoted numerous texts that indicate the inexhaustible abundance of the blessings and joys of the Aakhirah.

(ii) The Hereafter is also better from the perspective of quality.

The clothing, food, drink, jewellery and palaces of the people of Paradise will be far superior to their counterparts in this world. There is in fact no room for comparison, as even the smallest space in Paradise is better than this world and all that is in it. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"The space of a whip in Paradise is better than this world and everything in it"*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/85, no. 5613]

Also narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The space of the bow of any one of you in Paradise is better than all that the sun rises upon"*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/85, no. 5615]

The comparison between the women of Paradise and the women of this earth serves to demonstrate the superiority of that which is in Paradise. al-Bukhaari reports from Anas that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said,

"If a woman from the people of Paradise were to look at this earth, she would light up everything between it and fill it with her fragrance; the veil on her head is better than this world and all that is in it" [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/85, no. 5614]

(iii) Paradise is free from all the impurities and disappointments of this world.

Eating and drinking in this life results in the need for excretion and its associated unpleasant odours. If a person drinks wine in this world, he loses his mind. Women in this world menstruate and give birth, which are sources of pain and hurt. Paradise is fre from all of these discomforts: its people will not urinate, defecate, spit or suffer from catarrh. The wine of Paradise, as described by its Creator, is:

"Crystal-white, delicious to those who drink [thereof], free from intoxication, nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom" [37:46-47]

The water of Paradise does not become brackish, and its milk never changes in flavour:

"..rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes.." [47:15]

The women of Paradise are pure and free from menstruation, nifaas [postnatal bleeding] and all the other impurities suffered by women in this world, as Allaah (swt) says:

"...and they shall have therein Azwaajun Muttaharatun [Purified mates having no menses, urine, stools, etc]" [2:25]

The hearts of the people of Paradise will be pure, their speech will be good, their deeds righteous. There will be no hurtful, upsetting, offensive or provocative talk there, for Paradise is free of all worthless words and deeds:

"...free from any laghw [dirty, false, evil, vague talk], and free from sin" [52:23]

The only speech that is heard there is good, sincere and pure, free from all the shameful shortcomings of earthly speech:

"No Laghw [dirty, false, evil talk] will they hear therein, nor lying" [78:35]

"They shall not hear therein any Laghw, but only salaam [salutations of peace]" [19:62]

"Where they shall hear neither harmful speech nor falsehood" [88:11]

Paradise is the abode of purity and peace, "**No laghw will they hear therein, nor any sinful speech [like backbiting, etc], But only the saying of Salaam! Salaam! [greetings with peace]"** [56:25]

For this reason, when the people of Paradise have been saved from the Fire, they will be detained of a bridge between Paradise and Hell, where they will be purified by settling any wrongs that may be outstanding, so that they may enter Paradise, pure of heart and soul, free from any resentment, envy or other negative emotions of this world. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report that when the people of Paradise enter Paradise, ***"There will be no hatred of resentment among them, their hearts will be as one, and they will glorify Allaah, morning and evening"*** [al-Bukhaari from Abu Hurayrah, in Kitaab bid' al-Khalq, Baab maa jaa'a fi Sifaat al-Jannah, Fath al-Baari, 6/318]

Allaah indeed spoke the truth when He (swt) said,

"And We shall remove from their breasts any lurking sense of injury: [they will be] brothers [joyfully] facing each other on thrones [of dignity]" [15:47]

A "sense of injury" is hatred. It was reported from Ibn 'Abbaas and 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib that when the people of paradise enter Paradise they will drink from one spring, and Allaah (swt) will remove all sense of injury or hatred from their hearts, then they will drink from another spring, and their faces will become pure and bright [al-Qurtubee, at-Tadhkirah, p. 499]. This is probably what is meant by the aayah, "**And their Rabb will give them a pure drink"** [76:21]

(iv) The Pleasures of This World are Transient Whilst the Joys of the Hereafter are Lasting and Eternal

This is why Allaah (swt) calls the pleasures of this world "temporary conveniences" because they are enjoyed for a short while, then come to an end, but the joys of al-Aakhirah have no end:

"What is with you, must vanish, and what is with Allaah will endure.." [16:96]

"[It will be said to them]: This is Our Provision, which will never finish" [38:54]

"...its provision is eternal and so is its shade.." [13:35]

Allaah (swt) gave an example of how quickly this world will pass away:

"And put forward for them the example of the life of this world, it is like the water [rain] which We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it, and becomes fresh and green. But [later] it becomes dry and broken pieces, which the winds scatter. And Allaah is Able to do everything. Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of this world. But the

good righteous deeds that last are better with your Rabb for rewards and better in respect of hope" [18:45-46]

Allaah (swt) likened this life to the rain that falls from the sky and causes plants to grow and flower and bear fruit. This lasts for only a short time, before they shrivel and are blown away by the wind. Such are the luxuries of this life, such as youth, wealth, sons, lands and fields. All of this passes away; youth fades, health and vitality are replaced by sickness and old age, wealth and children may disappear, a man may be taken from his family and wealth, but the Hereafter will never vanish or go away:

"...And excellent indeed will be the home of the Muttaqoon, 'Adn Paradise which they will enter, under which rivers flow.." [16:30-31]

<u>(v) Seeking to Enjoy the Pleasures of this World and Neglecting the Hereafter Will be Followed By Regret and Sorrow When One Enters the Fire of Hell</u>

"Everyone shall taste death. And only on the Day of Resurrection will you be paid your wages in full. And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful. The life of this world is only the enjoyment of deception [a deceiving thing]" [3:185]

The Food and Drink of the People of Paradise

We have already discussed the trees and fruits of Paradise, including the ripe fruits, which hang within easy reach, so that the people of Paradise may pick whichever fruits they desire. The people will also have whatever food and drink they desire:

"Any fruit [any] that they may choose, And the flesh of fowls that they desire" [56:20-21]

"...there will be there all that the souls could desire, all that the eyes could delight in.." [43:71]

Allaah (swt) will permit them to take whatever they want of the good food and drink of Paradise:

"Eat and drink at ease for that which you have sent on before you in days past!" [69:24]

We have also mentioned above that in Paradise there will be a sea of water, a sea of wine, a sea of milk and a sea of honey, and the rivers of Paradise will flow out of these seas. There will be also many springs in Paradise, and its people will drink from these seas, rivers and springs.

(i) The Wine of the People of Paradise

One of the drinks that Allaah will bestow on the people of Paradise will be wine. The wine of Paradise is free of all the troubles and problems that characterise the wine of this world, which makes people lose their minds, and causes headaches, stomach aches and other physical disorders, or which may have something wrong in the way it is made, or its colour, etc. But the wine of Paradise is free from all such faults; it is pure and beautiful:

"Round them will be passed a cup of pure wine; white, delicious to the drinkers. Neither will they have ghoul [any kind of hurt, abdominal pain, headache, etc] from that, nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom" [37:45-47]

Allaah described the beauty of its white colour, then explained that its drinker enjoy it very much, without is affecting their minds:

"..rivers of wine delicious to those who drink.." [47:15]

And they will never be adversely affected by drinking it:

"..nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom" [37:47]

Elsewhere in the Qur'aan, Allaah describes the wine of Paradise,

"They will be served by immortal boys, With cups and jugs, and a glass from the flowing wine, Wherefrom they will get neither any aching of the head, nor any intoxication" [56:17-19]

Commenting on this passage, Ibn Katheer said, "it does not cause their heads to ache or their minds to be fogged; it is pure, although it still contains the ingredients that make it a delight to the drinker. ad-Dahhaak narrated that Ibn 'Abbaas said, *"Wine produces four things: drunkenness, headache, vomit and urine. Allaah (saw) has mentioned the wine of Paradise, and He has purified it of all these things."* [Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 6/514]

In another part of the Qur'aan, Allaah (swt) says:

"They will be given to drink pure sealed wine, the last thereof will be the smell of musk.." [83:25-26]

This wine is sealed or covered, and at the end of it, the drinker will find the scent of musk.

(ii) The first food of the people of Paradise

The first food which Allaah (swt) will present to the people of Paradise will be the caudate [extra] lobe of fish-liver. al-Bukhaari and Muslim report from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (ra) that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said,

"On the Day of Resurrection, the earth will be like one loaf of bread, which Allaah will turn around in His hands, just as any of you prepares bread whilst he is travelling, to offer it as food to the people of Paradise." A Jewish man came and said, "May the Most Merciful bless you, O Abul-Qaasim. Shall I not tell you what food [nuzul] will be offered to the people of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection?" The Prophet (saw) said, "Of course." The Jew said that the earth would be a single loaf of bread, just as the Prophet (saw) has said. The Prophet (saw) looked at us and smiled so broadly that his back teeth were visible, then he said, "Shall I not tell you of their food? Balam and noon [a large fish]". They asked, "What is that?" He said, ***"A bull and noon seventy thousand people will eat from the caudate [extra] lobes of their livers"*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/56]

an-Nawawi's comments on this hadith may be summarised as follows: "*Nuzul is the food prepared for a guest upon his arrival. Turning the bread around in one's hands means kneading it and tossing it from hand to hand, until it is flat and round like a disk. The meaning of the hadith is that Allaah (swt) will make the earth like a huge loaf of bread to feed the people of Paradise. Noon is a whale or large fish; balam is a Hebrew word that means "bull"; the caudate [extra] lobe of a fish liver is the best part of it."* [Sharh an-Nawawi 'alaa Muslim, 17/136]

al-Bukhaari reports that 'Abdullaah ibn Salaam asked the Prophet (saw) a number of questions when he first came to Madinah, one of which was, ***"What is the first thing that the people of Paradise will eat?***" He said, ***"The caudate [extra] lobe of fish liver"*** [Ibn Katheer, an-Nihaayah, 2/270]

Muslim reports from Thawban that a Jew asked that the Prophet (saw), "What will they be presented with when they enter Paradise?" He said, "The caudate [extra] lobe of fish liver." The Jew asked, "What will they eat after that?" The Prophet (saw) said, ***"The bull, which is grazing now in Paradise, will be slaughtered for them."*** The Jew asked, "What will they drink after that?" He said, ***"From a spring called Salsaabeel."*** The Jew said, "You have spoken the truth." [Ibn Katheer, an-Nihaayah, 2/270]

(iii) The food and drink of the people of Paradise does not produce any impure excrement.

It might cross one's mind that the food and drink of Paradise might produce the same as the food and drink of this world, namely excrement, urine, mucus, saliva, and so on. But this is not the case. Paradise is a place that is free from all impurities, and its people are free of all the blemishes of people of this world. A hadith reported by al-Bukhaari and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah clearly rejects such a nation: the Prophet (saw) said, ***"The first group to enter Paradise will be as beautiful as the full moon; they will not spit or blow their noses."*** [al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Bad' al-Khalq, Baab Maa jaa'a fi Sifaat al-Jannah, Fath al-Baari, 6/317, also Muslim in Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab Awwal Zumrah Tadhkul al-Jannah, 4/2178, no. 2834]

This does not only apply to the first group to enter Paradise, all those who enter will be similarly pure. Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"The first group of my ummah to enter Paradise will be as beautiful as the full moon and those that come after them will be like the brightest shining star, and those that follow them will be ranked according to their status. They will not defecate, urinate or blow their noses or spit."*** [Muslim in Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab awwal zumrah tadkhul al-Jannah, 4/2188, no. 2834]

It might be asked where will the waste produces go? This question was posed to the Prophet (saw) by his Sahabah and he replied, ***"[It will come out as] burps which are like musk."*** [Muslim in 4/2180, no. 2835]. Other parts the excretions will be turned into sweat like musk that will come out of their bodies.

(iv) Why Will the People of Paradise Eat and Drink and Comb their Hair?

If the people of Paradise are to abide there forever, and it is free form all discomfort, pain and sickness, if there is no hunger or thirst there, and no impurities or dirt, then why will the people of Paradise eat and drink, and wear perfume and comb their hair?

al-Qurtubee answered this question in at-Tadhkirah [p. 475, see also al-Fath, 6/325]: "The luxuries and clothing of the people of Paradise will not be for the purpose of warding off potential pains; they will not eat because of hunger or drink because of thirst, or wear perfume because of some offensive odour, because Paradise is a never-ending succession of delight and joy. Do you not remember the words of Allaah (swt) to Aadam?

"Verily you have [a promise from Us] that you will never be hungry therein nor naked. And you [will] suffer not from thirst therein nor from the sun's heat." [20:118-119]

The wisdom behind it [food and drink, etc] is so that Allaah will introduce Paradise to them in ways similar to the good things that they enjoyed on earth, but He will increase it in ways known only to Him."

(v) The Vessels and Cups of the People of Paradise

The vessels from which the people of Paradise will eat and drink will be of gold and silver. Allaah (swt) says:

"Trays of gold and cups will be passed round them.." [43:71] i.e. cups of gold.

And Allaah (swt) says, **"And amongst them, will be passed round vessels of silver and cups of crystal, crystal-clear, made of silver. They will determine the measure thereof according to their wishes."** [76:15] i.e it will combine the purity of crystal with the whiteness of silver.

al-Bukhaari and Muslim reported from Abu Musaa al-Ash'ari that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, ***"The believer in paradise will have a tent made of a hollowed out pearl.. and two gardens of silver, their vessels and everything in them, and two gardens of gold, their vessels and everything in them."*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/86]

Among the vessels from which they will drink will be cups and jugs and glasses:

"They will be served by immortal boys, with cups, and jugs and a glass from the flowing wine." [56:17-18]

The "cup" [koob] is something that has no handle or spout, the "jug" [ibreeq] has a handle and a spout and the "glass" [kaa's] is a cup that is filled with drink.

The Clothing, Jewellery and Incense-Burners Of the People of Paradise

The people of Paradise will wear the most luxurious clothes, amongst other things, garments of silk and bracelets of gold, silver and pearls. Allaah (swt) says:

"And their recompense will be Paradise, and silken garments, because they were patient." [76:12]

"...wherein they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls, and their garments will be of silk." [22:23]

"'Adn Paradise they will enter, therein will they be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls, and their garments there will be of silk." [35:33]

"...They will be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Rabb will give them a pure drink." [76:21]

Their clothes will be colourful, including garments of green silk and brocade:

"..They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine

silk and heavy brocade. They will recline therein on raised thrones. How good the recompense! How beautiful a couch to recline on." [18:31]

"Their garments will be of fine green silk, and gold embroidery. They will be adorned with bracelets of silver.." [76:21]

Their clothing will be far superior to any man-made garment. al-Barraa ibn 'Aadhib said, ***"A silken garment was brought to the Messenger (saw) and we began to admire its beauty and softness."*** The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "***The handkerchiefs of Sa'd ibn Mu'aadh are better than this."*** [al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Bid' al-Khalq, Baab Maa Jaa'a fi Sifat al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 6/319]

The Prophet (saw) also told us that the people of Paradise will have combs of gold and silver, and that they will perfume themselves with 'Ud at-Teeb, even though the scent of musk will be emanating from their pure bodies. al-Bukhaari narrates from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saw) said of those who will enter Paradise:

"Their vessels will be of gold and silver, their combs will be of gold and the coals of their incense-burners will be of aloe-wood [Abul-Yaman said, "of 'Ud at-Teeb] and their sweat will be musk." [al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Bid' al-Khalq, Baab Maa Jaa'a fi Sifat al-Jannah wan-Naar, Fath al-Baari, 6/319]

Their jewellery will include crowns. at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah report from al-Miqdaam ibn Ma'd Yakrib that among the honours bestowed upon the martyr will be: ***"..there will be placed upon his head a crown of dignity, one ruby of which is better than this world and all that is in it."*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/358, no. 3834, Saheeh Muslim, saheeh]

The clothing and jewellery of the people of Paradise will never wear out or fade. Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Whoever enters Paradise is blessed, and will never be miserable, his clothes will never wear out and his youth will never fade away."*** [Saheeh Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab fi Dawam Na'eem al-Jannah, 4/2181, no. 2836]

The Couches of the People of Paradise

The palaces of Paradise have been prepared, and in their gardens are places to sit and recline, beautiful couches of delightful colours and high beds whose interiors are lined with silk brocade, let alone how magnificent their outward appearance must be. There are cushions and splendid carpets laid out in the most delightful fashion. Allaah (swt) says:

"Therein will be thrones raised high, And cups set at hand, and cushions set in rows, and rich carpets [all spread out]" [88:13-16]

"They will recline [with ease] on thrones arranged in ranks. And We shall marry them to Houris [female fair ones] with wide lovely eyes." [52:20]

"A multitude of those [foremost] will be from the first generations [who embraced Islaam] and a few of those [foremost] will be from the later time [generations]. [They will be] on thrones woven with gold and precious stones,reclining thereon, face to face." [56:13-16]

This reclining on those thrones and couches will be one of the luxuries that the people of Paradise will enjoy when they gather together, as Allaah (swt) says,

"And we shall remove from their breasts any lurking sense of injury; [they will be like] brothers [joyfully] facing each other on thrones [of dignity]." [15:47]

"Reclining on green cushions and rich beautiful mattresses" [55:76}

"Reclining upon the couches lined with silk brocade" [55:54]

The Servants of the People of Paradise

The People of Paradise will be served by boys whom Allaah (swt) will create to serve them and who will be most beautiful and perfect in form:

"They will be served by immortal boys, With cups, and jugs, and a glass from the flowing wine." [56:17-18]

"And round about them will [serve] boys of everlasting youth. If you see them, you would think them scattered pearls." [76:19]

Ibn Katheer, may Allaah have mercy on him, said, *"Boys of eternal youth will go around to serve people of Paradise, boys who remain in that youthful form forever, never changing or advancing in age. It was said that they will be wearing earrings, to emphasise their youth, because such a thing is appropriate for young people, but it does not befit those who are older. And Allaah (swt) said [76:19] i.e. if you saw them going around to attend to the needs of their masters, with their beautiful faces and splendid colourful clothes and jewellery, you would think that they were scattered pearls. There is no more beautiful description than the picture of pearls scattered in a place of beauty."* [Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 7/184]

Some scholars suggested that these boys are the children of the Muslims and Mushrikeen who die in childhood, but this was refuted by al-'Allaamah Ibn Taymiyyah (ra), who explained that these boys of eternal youth are part of the creation of Paradise: *"..they are not the children of this world. When the children of this world enter Paradise, they will do so in a perfect form, like all the other people of Paradise, in the form of their father, Aadam."* [Majmu' al-Fatawa, 4/279, 4/311]

The Market of the People of Paradise

Muslim reported from Anas ibn Maalik that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said;

"In Paradise there is a market to which the people will come every Friday, then a wind will come from the north and blow on their faces, and clothes, and they will increase in beauty. Then they will return to their wives, who will also have increased in beauty. Their wives will say to them, "By Allaah, you increased in beauty after you left us." And they will say, "And you too, by Allaah, you have increased in beauty since you left us." [Saheeh Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannah, Baab fi Sooq al-Jannah, 4/2178, no. 2833]

an-Nawawi commented on this hadith, *"What is meant by a market is a gathering place where the people will come together, just as they gather in marketplaces in this world. Gathering together every Friday means that they will meet once a week, or what approximates to once a week; there will be no real weeks there, as*

there will be no sun or moon or days. The wind of Paradise was described specifically as being the north winds, because for the Arabs this is the wind that brings rain, coming from the direction of Syria, so they always hoped for a wind coming from the north. In the hadith this wind is called al-Mutheerah, i.e. something that carries things, because it will blow the sand or dust of Paradise into their faces, which is musk." [Sharh an-Nawawi ala Muslim, 17/170]

The Gatherings and Conversations of the People of Paradise

The people of Paradise will visit one another, in delightful gatherings where they will remember their lives in this world and how Allaah (swt) has blessed them by admitting them to Paradise. Allaah (swt) described the gatherings of the people of Paradise:

"And We shall remove from their breasts any lurking sense of injury, [they will be like] brothers, [joyfully] facing each other on thrones [of dignity]." [15:47]

Allaah (swt) has also described some of the kinds of conversation that will take place in their gatherings:

"And some of them draw near to others, questioning, saying, "Aforetime we were afraid with our families [of the punishment of Allaah], but Allaah has been gracious to us, and has saved us from the torment of the Fire. Verily, we used to invoke Him [Alone and none else] before. Verily He is Al-Barr, the All-Merciful." [52:25-28]

The Wishes of the People of Paradise

Some of the People of Paradise will wish for things that will be fulfilled in the strangest ways, unlike anything that happens in this world. The Messenger (saw) told of some of these and how they will be fulfilled.

Abu Hurayrah said that the Prophet (saw) was speaking and a bedouin man was present. The Prophet (saw) said: ***"A man from the people of Paradise will ask his Rabb for permission to grow things. Allaah will ask him, "Do you not have what you want?" He will say, "Of course, but I love to grow things." So he will sow the seeds and in the blinking of an eye the plant will grow and its fruit will ripen and become like mountains. Allaah (swt) will say, "Here it is. O son of Aadam nothing satisfies you!" The Bedouin said, "By Allaah! you wont find him except he is from Quraysh or the Ansaar for these are the people that love to grow things. As for us, we don't grow anything!" The Messenger of Allaah (saw) laughed."*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/95, no. 5653]

The Wives of the People of Paradise

(i) The Wife Of The Believer In This World Will Be His Wife In The Hereafter If She Is Righteous

"Gardens of 'Adn, which they shall enter, and [also] those who act righteously from among their fathers, and their wives and their offspring..." [13:23]

"They and their wives will be in pleasant shade, reclining on thrones." [36:56]

"Enter Paradise, you and your wives, in happiness" [43:70]

(ii) A Woman [Who Was Married More Than Once] Will Be With The Last of Her Husbands

In Taareekh ar-Raqqah, Abu 'Ali al-Hurani reported from Maymun ibn Mahran that *"Mu'aawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (ra) proposed to Umm ad-Darda' but she refused to marry him, saying, "I heard Abud-Dardaa' say that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said,* ***"A woman will be with the last of her husbands.""*** The men in its isnaad are trustworthy apart from al-'Abbaas ibn Saalih, whose biography is unknown. Abul-Shaykh reported it in at-Taareek with a saheeh isnaad only quoting the marfoo' version of it. at-Tabaraani reported it with a da'eef isnaad in al-Mu'jam al-Awsat but taking both isnaads into account strengthens it. The marfoo' version is saheeh, and it also has two corroborating reports that are mawqoof.

The first of these was reported by Ibn 'Asaakir from 'Ikrimah:

"Asmaa bint Abi Bakr was married to az-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwaam who was harsh towards her. She came to her father and complained to him, and he said, "O my daughter, have patience, for if a woman has a righteous husband, and he dies and she does not remarry after his death, they will be reunited in Paradise." [The men of its isnaad are thiqaat [trustworthy] but is it mursaal because 'Ikrimah never met Abu Bakr; he only heard it from Asmaa]

The second report was narrated by al-Bayhaqee in as-Sunan, where he says that Hudhayfah said to his wife, *"If you want to be my wife in Paradise, do not remarry after I die, for the woman in Paradise will be with the last of her husbands on earth."*

For this reason, Allaah forbade the wives of the Prophet (saw) to remarry after his death, because they will be his wives in the Hereafter.

(iii) al-Hoor al-'Eeyn

Allaah (swt) will marry the believers in Paradise to beautiful women who were not their wives in this world, as Allaah (swt) says:

"So [it will be] and We shall marry them to Houris with wide lovely eyes." [44:54]

al-Hoor is the plural of Hooraa', which is a woman, the white parts of her eyes intensely white, and the black is intensely black. al-'Eeyn is the plural fo 'Aynaa, which is the woman whose eyes are wide.

The Qur'aan describes al-Hoor al-'Eeyn as being firm and full-breasted:

"Verily, for al-Muttaqoon, there will be a success; gardens and grapeyards and young full-breasted [mature] maidens of equal age." [78:31-33]

Al-Hoor al-'Eeyn are creatures that Allaah (swt) has made especially for Paradise, and has made them virgins:

"Verily, We have created [their companions] of special creation, and made them virgin-pure [and undefiled], beloved [by nature], equal in age." [56:35-37]

The fact that they are virgins means that no-one has ever married them before:

"...whom no man or jinn has touched before them." [55:56]

This refutes the idea that the wives that Allaah (swt) will create for them in Paradise will be their wives from this life, made young again after old age had overtaken them. That idea if correct in that Allaah (swt) will admit the believing women to Paradise with their youth restored but they are not al-Hoor al-'Eeyn whom Allaah created in Paradise.

The Qur'an also speaks of the beauty of the women of al-Jannah:

"And [there will be] Houris with wide lovely eyes [as wives for the pious], Like unto preserved pearls." [56:22-23]

Maknoon ["preserved"] means hidden or protected, something whose colour is not changed by exposure to sunlight or by being tampered with. Elsewhere, Allaah likens them to rubies and coral, two beautiful precious stones:

"In them will be [maidens] restraining their glances, whom no man or jinn has touched before them, Then which of the favours of your Rabb will you deny? Like unto rubies and coral." [55:56-58]

al-Hoor are also described as restraining their gaze upon their husbands i.e. they restrict their gaze and don't let their eyes wander to others. Allaah (swt) has stated that they are very beautiful, and it is sufficient to know that Allaah (swt) said:

"In them will be fair [companions] good and beautiful; then which of the favours of your Rabb will you deny? Companions restrained [as to their glances] in [goodly] pavilions" [55:70-72]

The women are not like the women of this world. They are free of al-Hayd [menstruation], an-Nifaas [post-natal bleeding], spittle, mucus, urine and stools. This is what is referred to in the aayah:

"..And they shall have therein Azwaajun Mutahharatun [purified mates]" [2:25]

The Prophet (saw) told us about the beauty of the wives of the People of Paradise. al-Bukhaari and Muslim reported from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger (saw) said, "***...the marrow of whose leg-bones will be visible through the flesh because of their extreme beauty."*** [as-Saheeh, Kitaab al-Khalq, Baab Maa Jaa'a fi Sifaat al-Jannah, Fath al-Baari, 6/318 and Muslim in Kitaab al-Jannah wa Sifaat Na'eem ahlilhaa, Baab awwal zumrah tadkhul al-Jannah, 4/2178, no. 2834]

Look at this beauty that the Prophet (saw) described! Can you find any comparison to it in the world that you know?! :

"If one of the women of Paradise were to look at the people of this world, everything in between them would be lit up and filled with her fragrance. The veil on her head is better than this world and everything in it." [al-Bukhaari, in as-Saheeh, Kitaab al-Jihaad, Baab wa Zawwajnahum bi Hoor-'Eeyn. Fath al-Baari, 6/15]

The smallest number of wives that any one man will have in Paradise is seventy-two. It was reported that ***the Shaheed will have seventy two wives from amongst al-Hoor a--'Eeyn*** [Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/357, no. 3834, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Maajah from al-Miqdaam ibn Ma'd Yakrib]

The Song of al-Hoor al-'Eeyn

The Messenger (saw) told us that al-Hoor in Jannah sing with sweet, beautiful voices. In al-Mu'jam al-Awsat, at-Tabaraani reports with a saheeh isnaad from Ibn 'Umar that the Prophet (saw) said,

"The wives of the people of Paradise will sing to their husband in the most beautiful voices that anyone has ever heard. What they will sing is: "We are good and beautiful, the wives of a noble people, who look at their husbands content and happy." And they will sing, "We are eternal, and will never die, we are safe and will never fear, we are remaining here and will never go away."" [Saheeh al-Jaami as-Sagheer, 2/48, no. 1557; also Abu Na'eem, ad-Diyaa in Sifaat al-Jannah]

Samawayh reported in al-Fawaa'id from Anas that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "al-Hoor al-'Eeyn are singing in Paradise saying, "***We are the beautiful houris, we are being kept for noble husbands.""*** [Saheeh al-Jaami', 2/58, no. 1598]

The Jealousy of al-Hoor al-Eeyn over their Husbands in this World

The Prophet (saw) told us that al-Hoor feel jealous over their husbands in this world, if the wife of one of them upsets him. Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi report with a saheeh isnaad from Mu'aadh that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said,

"No woman in this world upsets her husband but his wife from among al-Hoor al-'Eeyn will say, "Do not upset him, may Allaah kill you! For he is with you only temporarily, and soon he will leave you and come to us."" [Saheeh al-Jaami' as-Sagheer, 6/125, no. 7069]

(iv) The believer in Paradise will be given the Strength of One Hundred Men

Anas reported that the Prophet (saw) said, "The believer in Paradise will be given such and such strength." He was asked, "O Messenger of Allaah, will he really be able to do that?" He said, ***"He will be given the strength of one hundred men."*** [it was reported by at-Tirmidhi, Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/90, no. 5636, at-Tirmidhi said: "ghareeb saheeh."]

The People of Paradise Will Laugh at the Fire

After Allaah (swt) admits the people of Paradise to Paradise, they will call out to their opponents among the kuffaar in Hell, rebuking and scolding them:

"And the dwellers of Paradise will call out to the dwellers of the Fire [saying]: "We have indeed found true what our Rabb promised us; have you also found true, what your Rabb promised [warnings, etc]? They will say "Yes". Then a crier will proclaim between them: "The Curse of Allaah is on the Dhaalimoon [wrongdoers]" [7:44]

The kuffaar used to dispute with the believers in this world, making fun of them and insulting them, but on that Day the believers will be victorious: they will be in a state of everlasting joy, looking at the wrongdoers and making fun of them:

"Verily, al-Abraar will be in delight, on thrones, looking [at all things]. You will recognise in their faces the brightness of delight. They will be given to drink pure sealed wine, the last thereof will be the smell of musk, and for this let [all] those strive who want to strive. It [that wine] will be mixed with Tasneem, a spring whereof drink those nearest to Allaah. Verily [during the earthly life] those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed, and whenever they passed by them, used to wink to one another [in mockery]; and when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting; and when they saw them, they say, "Verily! These have indeed gone astray!" But the [disbelievers] had not been sent as watchers over them [the believers]. But this Day those who believe will laugh at the disbelievers on [high] thrones, looking [at all things]. Are not the disbelievers paid [fully] for what they used to do?" [83:22-36]

By Allaah, the kuffaar will finally get the punishment that they deserve, a punishment that fits their crimes. The believer who is now in the luxury of Paradise will remember that colleague or friend who used to encourage him to follow kufr in this world and called him to embrace those misguided principles that would have placed him in the ranks of the kuffaar and enemies of Allaah (swt). He will tell his companions about that former colleague, and tell them to look at him and his punishment. When he sees how he is being punished, he will realise the extent of the blessing that Allaah (swt) has bestowed upon him, and how Allaah (swt) has saved him from a similar fate. Then he will address his former companion and rebuke him:

"Then they will turn to one another, mutually questioning. A speaker of them will say, "Verily I had a companion [in the world] who used to say, "Are you among those who believe [in resurrection after death], [that] when we die and become dust and bones, shall we indeed [be raised up] to receive reward or punishment [according to our deeds]?" The Man said, "Will you look down?" So he looked down and saw him in the midst of the Fire. He said, "By Allaah! You have nearly ruined me. Had it not been for the Grace of my Rabb, I would certainly have been among those brought forth [to Hell]." [Allaah (swt) informs about the true believer that he said], "Are we not then to die [any more]? Except our first death and we shall not be punished? [after we have entered Paradise] Truly this is the supreme success! For the like of this let the workers work." [37:50-61]

Tasbeeh And Takbeer Are Among The Delights Of The People Of Paradise

Paradise is the abode of reward and delight, not of trials and testing. A problem might arise concerning the hadith reported by al-Bukhaari and others from Abu Hurayrah, according to which the Prophet (saw) described the first group to enter Paradise and said,

"They will glorify Allaah (swt) morning and evening." [Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Kitaab Bid' al-Khalq, Baab maa jaa'a fi Sifaat al-Jannah, Fath al-Baari, 6/318]

But there is nothing problematic in this report, insha'Allaah, because, as al-Qurtubee said *"This tasbeeh is not the matter of obligation or imposition."* As was reported by Muslim, Jaabir explained it as follows, "*They will be inspired with tasbeeh and takbeer as they are inspired with breathing."* The analogy of breathing was used because it is something man does with no conscious effort. Their breathing will become tasbeeh, and the reason for this is that their hearts will be illuminated with the knowledge of their rabb, may He be glorified, and filled with love for Him, and whoever loves a thing remembers it frequently."" [Fath al-Baari, 6/326]

Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah stated that this tasbeeh and takbeer will be one of the pleasures enjoyed by the people of Paradise. He said, "*This is not the kind of obligatory work that is done for the sake of a specific reward. It is the same as the kind of deeds that people do for pleasure and enjoyment."* [Majmu' Fataawa, 4/330]

The Best Thing That The Ahl al-Jannah Will Be Given Is The Pleasure of Allaah (swt) And To See His Face

"Some faces that Day will be Nadhirah [shining, radiant], Looking at their Rabb." [75:22-23]

Ibn al-Itheer said, *"Seeing Allaah is the ultimate joy in the Hereafter, the most precious gift of Allaah. May Allaah (swt) help us reach that goal."* [Jaami' al-Usool, 10/557]

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri reported that the Prophet (saw) said that ***"Allaah will say to the people of Paradise, "O People of Paradise! They will say, "We are at Your Worship, our Rabb, and all goodness is in Your hand." He will say, "Are you content?" They will say, "Why should we not be content, O Rabb, when you have given us what you have not given to anyone else of Your Creation?" He will say, "Shall I not give you better than that?" They will say, "O Rabb, what could be better than that?" He will say, "I grant you My pleasure and I will never be displeased with you after that."*** [al-Bukhaari and Muslim, Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh]

Muslim and at-Tirmidhi reported from Suhayb ar-Rumi that the Messenger of Allaah (saw) said: ***"When the people of Paradise enter Paradise, Allaah will say: "Do you want anything more?" They will say, "Have You not made our faces white [i.e. honoured us]? Have You not admitted us to Paradise and saved us from the Fire?" Then the veil will be lifted, and they will never have been given anything more dear to them than looking at their Rabb, may He be Blessed and Exalted."***

One report adds, *"Then the Prophet (saw) recited the aayah,* **"For those who have done good is the best [reward i.e. Paradise] and even more [i.e. the honour of glancing at the Countenance of Allaah]..."** [10:26]

Thus seeing the Face of Allaah (swt) was interpreted as part of the "more" [mazeed] which Allaah has promised to al-Muhsinoon [those who have done good]:

"There they will have all that they desire - and We have more [for them, i.e. a glance at the All-Mighty, All-Majestic." [50:35]

This is a joy and honour that will be denied to the Kuffaar and Mushrikeen:

"Nay, surely they [evildoers] will be veiled from seeing their Rabb that day." [83:15]

Imaam Maalik ibn Anas, the Imaam of al-Madinah, used this aayah as proof that **"Looking at their Rabb"** [75:23] literally meant they would see the face of Allaah, as some had interpreted it as meaning the people would be waiting for their reward. Maalik said, *"They have lied.... The people will look at Allaah on the Day of Resurrection with their own eyes. If the believers are not going to see their Rabb on the Day of Resurrection, why did Allaah (swt) say that the kuffaar would be veiled from Seeing Him?"* [See Sharh as-Sunnah, Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3/100 no. 5662]

at-Tahhaawi, the great Hanafi Imaam, said in his "al-'Aqeedah at-Tahhaawiyyah", *"This seeing [Allaah] is true, something that will happen to the people of Paradise; it is not necessary to attempt to define it or describe how it will happen. It is mentioned in the Book of Our Rabb [75:23]. The way it will happen is according to the will and knowledge of Allaah and we have to believe in it as it was narrated from the Messenger of Allaah in the saheeh hadith. We should not interpret it according to our own inclinations and opinions, for no one is sound in his deen except the one who submits fully to Allaah and His Messenger. What*

is ambiguous should be referred to one who has knowledge (i.e. a scholar)" [Sharh at-Tahhaawiyyah, 203]

The Refutation of Those Who Differ

The commentator of at-Tahhaawiyyah explained the different misguided opinions on this matter: *"Those who differed with regard to the believers seeing Allaah (swt) on the Day of Resurrection are the Jahmiyyah and al-Mu'tazilah, and those who followed them of the Khawaarij and Imaamiyyah. Their false opinion is refuted by the Qur'aan and Sunnah. The fact that the believers will see Allaah (swt) is confirmed by the words of the Sahaabah, Taabi'een, well known scholars of Islaam, Ahl al-Hadith and by all the groups of philosophers (Ahl al-Kalaam) who belong to Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah.*"

"This issue is one of the most important matters of Usool ad-Deen [the fundamentals of religion] for it is the ultimate goal for which people are striving and competing, and it will be denied to those who are "veiled from seeing their Rabb" and who will be turned away from His Mercy."

He then explained the dangers of misinterpretation:

"This is what corrupted both the world and religion. This is what the Jews and Christians did to the texts of the Tawraat and Injeel, and Allaah (swt) warned us against doing likewise, but the confused people insisted on following their path. How much harm has been caused to the religion and its followers by wrong interpretations! Was 'Uthmaan killed except as a result of misinterpretation? Would the Battle of Siffeen, the Battle of the Camel, the killing of Husayn and the Battle of al-Harrah have happened without there being misinterpretation? Would the Khawaarij, Mu'tazilah and Rawaafid have emerged, and would the ummah have split into seventy-three sects, if there had been no misinterpretation?"

He explained that there were two reasons that the aayah should be taken to mean the believers will see Allaah:

<u>(1) the Understanding of the Text itself</u>

"an-Nadhar (looking) is connected by Idaafah (genitive grammatical possessive structure) to al-Wajh (face) which is the location of looking (because the face is the site of the eyes). The use of the word "ilaa" (here translated as "at") clearly means that they will be looking and seeing with their eyes; the wording has no indication that it could mean anything other than that. It is crystal clear that what Allaah meant is that they will see their Rabb, subhaanahu, with their own eyes, which are located in the face.

"The Arabic word Nadhar is used in a number of ways and may mean different things, depending on the context:

"If it stands alone with nothing following it, it means "stopping" and "waiting" - **"...Wait for us! (undhuroonaa) Let us get something from your light!.."** [57:13]

"If it is followed by "fi" (lit. "in") it means "thinking" or "pondering": **"Have they not considered (yandhuru fi) the dominion of the heavens and the earth?**" [7:185]

"If it is followed by ilaa (at) it refers to looking or seeing with the eyes: **"Look at (undhuru ilaa) their fruits when they begin to bear"** [6:99]

So how can it be interpreted otherwise when it refers to the face, which is the site of the eyes?"

(2) the way in which the Salaf understood the text.

He quotes a number of reports to illustrate this:

al-Hasan said, *"[Their faces] will look at their Rabb and will become radiant with His light."*

Abu Saalih reported from Ibn 'Abbaas (ra) that **"Looking at their Rabb"** [75:23] meant, *"They will be looking at the face of Allaah, azza wa jall."*

'Ikrimah said that **"Some faces will be Nadhirah"** indicated *"because of joy, and looking at their Rabb"* meant *"truly looking at their Rabb"* and he reported a similar opinion from Ibn 'Abbaas. This is the opinion of the Mufassireen of Ahlus-Sunnah.

Concerning the aayah, **"There they will have all that they desire - and We shall have more [for them]"** at-Tabari reported that 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib (ra) and Anas ibn Maalik said, *"This means that they will see Allaah, azza wa jall."*

He explains the meaning of "**even more" [az-Ziyaadah]** as looking at the face of Allaah, as the report narrated by Muslim in his saheeh from Suhayb *"..then the veil will be lifted and they will see Him, and they will never be given anything more precious to them than seeing Allaah (swt). This is az-Ziyaadah [the "even more" referred to in the aayah]".* The same hadith was narrate with a number of isnaads and slightly different wording from others, and this is how it was interpreted by the Sahaabah as Ibn Jareer reported from Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq, Hudhayfah, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari and Ibn 'Abbaas (ra).

at-Tabari and others quoted from ash-Shaafi'ee via al-Mazani, and al-Haakim said, "al-Asaam told us that ar-Rabee' ibn Sulayma said, *"I was with Muhammad ibn Idrees ash-Shaafi'ee when a letter reached him from Upper Egypt in which he was asked his opinion about the aayah [83:15], and he said, "As those [evildoers] will be veiled from Seeing Allaah because of His wrath towards them indicates that these people (the believers) will see Him because He will be pleased with them."""*

The Mu'tazilah however concluded from the aayaat **"You cannot see Me..."** [7:143] and **"No vision can grasp Him.."** [6:103] that therefore no one would see Allaah, but these can in fact be used as proof against their position, for the first aayah proves that the believers will see Allaah for a number of reasons:

(i) Nobody could think that Musaa (as), the Messenger of Allaah and the most knowledgeable about Allaah at that time, the one who spoke with Allaah, would ask to see Allaah [as is stated in the earlier part of this aayah] if it were improper to do so.

(ii) Allaah did not rebuke Musaa for this request although when Nuh asked Allaah to save his son, He rebuked him for doing so [see 11:46]

(iii) Allaah said, **"..You cannot see Me.."**, but He did not say, "I can never be seen" or "It is not possible to see Me" or "I am invisible". There is a difference. This indicates that Allaah could be seen but that Musaa did not have the strength to see him in this life because human beings in this world are too weak to be able to endure seeing Allaah.

(iv) The ideas mentioned in (iii) can be explained by referring to the next part of the aayah

"...but look upon the mountain. If it stands still in its place then you shall see Me." [7:143]

Allaah showed Musaa that despite its strength and solid nature, a mountain in this world could not withstand exposure to the sight of Allah, so how could a human being who was created weak, endure it?

(v) Allaah could have made the mountain stable, which is possible, but he had placed a condition for seeing Him. If the mountain stood form when he appeared to it, then Musa would be able to see Him

(vi) Allaah said,

"..When his Rabb appeared to the mountain, He made it collapse to dust.." [7:143].

If it is possible for Him to reveal Himself to a mountain, which is an inanimate object how could it be impossible for Him to reveal Himself to His Messengers and those whom He loves (awliyaa) in the abode of honour which is Paradise?

(vii) Allaah spoke to Musa and if a person is permitted to speak and converse with no mediator, then it is more befitting for him to be able to see the One to whom he speaks. No one could deny that people may see Allaah unless they also deny that Allaah may speak to them and those who denied that Allaah could be seen did in fact also deny that Allaah could speak to his slaves. Their claim that "Lan" (never) implies absolute and eternal negation can be answerd by the fact that the people will see Allaah in the Hereafter and such a negation will not necessarily be carried over into the Hereafter, especially as in this case a condition was attached. There are other similar instances in the Qur'aan - **"But they will never long for it.."** [2:95] although elsewhere He says, **"And they will cry, O Maalik! Let your Rabb make an end of us." He will say, "Verily you shall abide forever"** [43:77]. If "lan" meant absolute and eternal negation (i.e. that such and such a thing would never happen), it would not be possible to impose conditions, but Allaah (swt) says, **"Therefore I will not leave this land until my father permits me.."** [12:80] which proves that "lan" does not imply absolute negation.

The evidence that people may see Allaah is presented in the most eloquent fashion, and in the context of praise, and it is well-known that praise is something positive; a thing that does not exist cannot be praised. When Allaah (swt) praises by negation it implies something positive; a thing that does not exist cannot be praised. When Allaah (swt) praises by negation it implies something positive, like when He is praised by saying that He neither slumbers nor sleeps, which implies that He is the Eternal One; or by saying that He never dies, which implies that He is the eternally living; or by saying that He never feels tired or exhausted, which implies He is the All-Powerful; or by saying that He never forgets or lacks awareness, which implies that He is All-Knowing. So there is no praise in negation unless it implies something positive. The One Who is Perfect cannot share in the quality that is denied. The meaning is that Allaah (swt) may be seen but He cannot be seen in His entirety. The aayah "No vision can grasp Him" indicates that He is Almighty and because of His greatness he cannot be fully comprehend, for idraak [comprehension] is something that surpasses seeing, as Allaah (swt) says,

"And when the two hosts saw each other the companions of Musa said, "We are sure to be overtaken." [26:61]

Musaa did not deny that they saw them but he denied that they would overwhelm them because seeing [ru'yah] and overwhelming or surrounding [idraak] could take place independently of one another. Allaah may be seen [ru'yah] but He may never be fully comprehended just as He may be known, but never completely. This is how the Sahaabah and Imaam understood this aayah, as their opinions are recorded in its tafseer. Even the Sun, which is a mere created entity, cannot be fully comprehended by the one who sees it.

The hadith narrated by the Prophet (saw) and his companions concerning the believers seeing Allaah has also reached the level of tawaatur and were recorded by the compilers of the six books, for example, the hadith of Abu Hurayrah, "Some people asked, ***"O Messenger of Allaah, will we see our Rabb on the Day of Resurrection?" The Messenger of Allaah (saw) said, "Do you doubt that the moon is seen when it***

is full?" They said, "No, O Messenger of Allaah." He said, "Do you doubt that the sun is seen when there are no clouds to hide it?" They said, "No." He said, then you will see Him just as clearly." [narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim, who narrated a similar hadith from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri, and narrated by Jareer ibn 'Abdullaah al-Bajlee narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim; Abu Musa narrated in al-Bukhaari, Sharh at-Tahhawwiyah, p.204-210]